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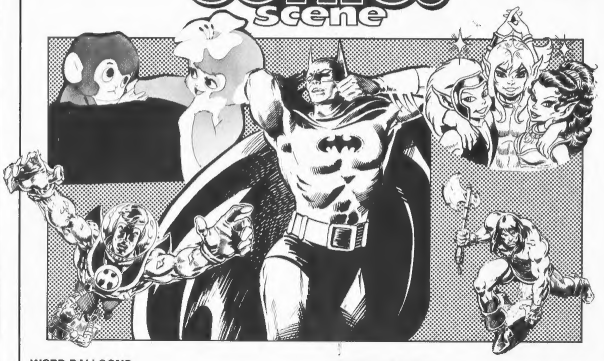
JULY



WORD BALLOONS
Call to Action 4

LETTERING
With Frank Miller, John Byrne, Roger Stern and Mike Barr 5

COMICS REPORTER
Even more changes at DC and Marvel 9

FANDOM
The Pendulum of *Legion* Fandom 16

BARNEY GOOGLE
Who was that man? 20

AROUND THE WORLD
Osamu Tezuka's world 24

DO'S AND DON'TS
Sabatini and Hembeck together again 30

WRITING AND EDITING *CONAN*
A look at the comic incarnation 32

***CONAN* THE MOVIE**
Photo preview 34

JACK KATZ Part II
Dreams, the early days and the *Kingdom* 37

GENE COLAN
Meet the master artist of mood and shadow 41

LOOSE CRUSE
Not being there yet 46

SPECIAL REPORT
Doing *Prince Valiant* right 48

***CONAN* THE MERCHANDISED**
From novels to towels 50

GUEST SPOT
Richard and Wendy Pini with advice 54

CREATING THE COMICS
Lettering the pages 58

ED. NOTES
The editor-in-chief finally gets his say 66

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ABOUT THE COVER: Arnold Schwarzenegger as Conan fights for his life and revenge in the climactic fight from the Universal release. Surrounding him are some of Marvel Comics' versions of Conan over the years. For a chat with the creative team see page 32; for a look at the movie see the centerspread. Photo © 1982 Freesman Productions; art © Marvel Comics Group, Wonder Woman ® and © 1982 DC Comics Inc.; Phoenix courtesy Jerry Beck; Prince Valiant © 1982 King Features Syndicate.

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Word Balloons

CALL TO ACTION!

Over the next several months, comic readers will notice a number of new titles popping up from DC Comics. Along with the (yet again) Blackhawk revival and Supergirl title, there are some interesting and, more importantly, different types of stories coming. *Amethyst, Princess of Gem World, Night Force* (you read about it here as *Dark Force Challengers),* and *Pandora Pan*.

What's important is that they are not standard superhero comics. They explore horror and fantasy and are much more character-oriented. It's refreshing to see a major company such as DC try out new things, especially when facing new forms of competition in the direct sales marketplace.

Meanwhile, Marvel continues to rely on the superhero titles and movie or product tie-ins. While DC has expanded their scope, Marvel gives us *G.I. Joe* and a second *X-Men* title. Whatever happened to their much-talked about romance comic or has their innovation been placed solely in their graphic novel series?

We feel it is important, especially now when readership continues to decline, for the two major publishers to think seriously about exploring different genres and concepts. Agreed, superheroes are the best suited for four-color comics, but in the past, success has been attained through solid war titles, mysteries or humor. If DC and Marvel don't explore the limits of what the market (both direct and newsstand) can currently sustain, then they will lose out to the independent publishers such as Eclipse, Pacific and New Media.

Already Pacific has plans to go into the mass market with their comic adaptation of Ralph Bakshi's *Fire and Ice.* If successful, you can bet they will try more titles outside of direct sales-only. They have taken the usual action-oriented comics and given them a slight twist with Mike Grell's fast-paced *Starslayer* and Dave Stevens' finely rendered *Rocketeer.*

Breaking away from the comic-sized format in black and white, anthology publications such as *Eclipse* and *Gates of Eden* have done much to expand the scope and potential of comics. Just look at the touching "Ragamuffins" series in *Eclipse* or those varied glimpses of life in the '60s via *Gates.* Now, if only *Adventure Illustrated* would give us different kinds of adventure instead of just science fiction adventure, we'd all benefit.

Let's not forget the groundbreaking excitement caused by the epic-lengthed *First Kingdom,* beautifully-drawn *Elfquest* and hilarious *Cerebus the Aardvark.* All three are commercial and critical successes that should prove to skeptics that not everything must look like it was drawn by Jack Kirby or Neal Adams, or read like the umpteenth retelling of the standard superhero tale. These three have already inspired people to produce different formats and different concepts such as *Justice Machine* or the space opera adventures of *Nexus.*

Comics are an entertainment format that should be first, last and always entertaining. If they're not, then what's the use? Fortunately, there are more interesting and *fun* things to read from Marvel and DC and Charlton these days than in the past five or so years. Just pick up (if you haven't already) the wonderful new version of *Ka-Zar,* or the Gerry Conway/Gene Colan *Batman,* or Bob Layton's *Hercules* limited series, or Paul Levitz and Keith Giffen's freshly inspired *Legion of Super-Heroes* or even such standard favorites as *Jonah Hex* and *The Avengers.*

To remain *fresh, entertaining* and *commercially viable,* then more titles will have to try new things, explore different directions and, above all, stop retreading old ideas. Everyone is looking for the next *Superman, Spider-Man* or *Elfquest.* If everyone keeps churning out the same old stuff, the next big thing won't be coming for a long, long time.

—Robert Greenberger

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Lettering

MORE!

Yeah, that's right. We were swamped with mail on issue number two but that's not good enough! While we can't answer you personally, we need to know what you want to see and especially what you *don't* want to see.

Lettering
COMICS SCENE
475 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016

Byrne-ing Response

Dear Sir:

. . . Let me hastily assure the readers of COMICS SCENE that John Byrne's remarks "On Creator's Rights" do not represent the beliefs of every member of the comics profession. We are not all such happy "cogs."

The old "flat rate" system of compensation for comics artists has had much to do with turning pulp comics into a vast wasteland. Since only a handful of the characters created in the last 40 years can still maintain an audience, the industry needs new creations, fresh blood to revitalize the form and attract each new generation of readers. To get creations, you need creators.

But the young creators of today have seen what happened to Siegel and Shuster and Ditko and Kirby. We can see what is to be lost in giving our creations away. And so, top creative people have been sitting on ideas, good ideas, potentially great ideas, waiting for a more equitable arrangement. The publishers know this, and are struggling mightily to provide it. We know, they know, that the old "machine" is running down.

All of which makes this past year, with its historic developments, so very thrilling. Both Marvel and DC have taken important steps: royalties are now paid on comics that sell well; creators receive a percentage of the profits made from the licensing of a character; in some cases, creators keep the copyright on their creations. The connection between what we do and how well it does in the marketplace has finally been established, and the process, of creators and publishers working together to make the comics industry what it should be, has begun.

As John said, it's a better business to work in than it ever has been. I love it. But it should not be forgotten that without the sabre-rattling and breast-beating and foot-stomping of certain noisy little "cogs," the publishers would have little ammunition with which to convince *their* superiors to change things—and comics would continue their long, slow spiral to oblivion.

Frank Miller

Dear Bob:

. . . John Byrne is one of the most talented pencillers to enter the field in recent years, and I would very much like to work with him one day. But after reading his column, "On Creator's Right," I hope John doesn't mind if I negotiate my own contract.

The problem with John's column is that while much of the actual thinking therein follows logically, it's based on faulty suppositions. For example, John asks: ". . . If we are going to have creator's rights . . . should we not then also have . . . creator's wrongs? . . . No one has said they would be willing to take a loss if their creation fell flat on its very expensive face." The reason no one has said they would be willing to take a loss is because in the current state of comic books, creators are already justly penalized if their creations don't sell.

To elaborate: In any medium that must survive on the marketplace to make a profit, the concept of "creator's wrongs" is automatically built into the system, for if the creation doesn't sell—doesn't make a profit—the publisher will cease to buy from the creator. If I sell a novel to Jones Publishing and the book doesn't sell, then Jones Publishing takes a loss, yes, perhaps a substantial one. But I, as the creator, take a loss, too, because Jones Publishing will think a long time before buying another novel from me. Years ago, when I first began working for DC Comics, a well-informed source told me that a former publisher had bought a new comic book from a creator, a comic that said publisher was sure would be the next Superman. Well, said new comic book wasn't, DC took a loss, and also stopped employing said creator, who had a number of other failures under his belt. So while John is correct in saying the company bears most of the cost in buying and publishing a comic book, the company also holds the final say in whom they buy from. If comic books written by Mike Barr don't sell—on an ongoing, regular basis—then DC would be very stupid to continue to employ Mike Barr. That's why I try to make my work both personally satisfying *and* commercial.

I'm not sure what John means by the concept of a creator willing to ". . . take a loss . . . to return the money they made while producing some of these duds . . ." but I hope he's not talking about the return of wages already paid. The laborer is worth his hire, after all, and in publishing, such advances have always been non-returnable. I would look upon the concept of a returnable advance to be a giant step *backward* for artists and writers, and fight such a move strenuously.

John talks against such creative boycotts, offering as his reasoning: ". . . In the first place, it is highly unlikely that there is going to *be* a next Spider-Man, and in the second place, if Stan Lee had thought along these lines, there wouldn't have been a Spider-Man in the first place." In the first place, John is statistically correct, but I

CHARACTER © 1982 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

wouldn't think much of a creator who didn't have enough faith in his character to believe that he had created the next Spider. After all, for a long time, people were calling Spider-Man "the next Superman," and there was a time when there wasn't even a Superman. In the second place, though, John is wrong, perhaps forgetting that when Lee created Spider-Man, he was the editor of Marvel Comics (or what was to become Marvel Comics). It makes all the sense in the world for an editor, whose income depends on the success of his books, to create a character to stimulate sales in those books. And any editor will tell you that it's part of his job to help create villains, supporting characters, and plots for his books, for such editors are not them freelancers, but employees of the company. In the same vein, Mort Weisinger, the story goes, created two characters in his first day on staff at DC: Aquaman and Green Arrow. Neither has been the next Superman, true, but they've made DC Comics their share of bread.

Later, John says: "All right, so we (meaning comics creators) don't get all the benefits we might. They'll come." They may indeed, come eventually, but I would prefer to play gadfly rather than to be "a cog in the machine," and give company decision-makers some short-term headaches to make sure that the benefits arrive *sooner*. Things are looking good nowadays, but the struggle is by no means over, and in all fields of endeavor, the greatest advances are made by the gadflies and the mavericks, not the "company man."

Mike W. Barr

Dear Bob,

. . . I enjoyed reading John Byrne's provocative article, "On Creator's Rights," in COMICS SCENE #2. John made some very good points, but I think he missed the boat with some of his comments.

When a writer or artist creates a new character for Marvel or any other company operating under the "work-for-hire" system, the company becomes sole owner of that character and may reap whatever rewards it can from sales of the comic books themselves and related merchandising. Understandably, some comics creators think they should be entitled to share in whatever profits their characters generate. John excuses the work-for-hire system by saying it is "highly unlikely" that the character will be as profitable for the company as, say, a Spider-Man or Superman. He's right, of course.

But if there really is little or no advantage to owning the rights to a comic book character, why are the major companies so pigheaded about sharing those rights with creators? The companies certainly want those rights, and they want *all* of them—there must be a reason for this selfishness. If the chances of any one character hitting it big are really so insignificant, then the companies should be pleased to toss this skinny bone to the creators, secure in the knowledge that they are losing nothing of value.

The fact is, while the chance of any single character catching on big with the public is indeed slim, it is inevitable that *some* characters *will* achieve an appreciable level of popularity. When that happens, the creators want more than just a handshake and a friendly slap on the back from the publisher.

The new bonus plans from DC and Marvel are a step in the right direction as far as the comic books themselves are concerned, but the plans stop short of sharing merchandising and licensing rights with comic creators; and if a comic book character "hits," it is these areas that are the most lucrative.

John is right on the mark when he talks about comic book creators not having it both ways—one cannot expect to get both a sizeable, no-risk wage on a regular basis and retain complete ownership of the material he creates, at least until the creator has achieved a loyal following that can guarantee sales. Before this time, the publisher is taking all the financial chances and will suffer a certain number of losses, and so deserves fair compensation for shouldering the risk. On the other hand, if a creator is willing to assume some of that risk himself—say, by accepting a lower page rate in exchange for a percentage of the profit or co-ownership of the copyrights—that option should be available to him. Then each creator can make his own choices, and also if anyone getting paid healthy page rates is willing to refund part of his wages if his book fails; of course no one is going to accept a deal like that, and why should he? Why should a creator assume financial risk in the case of loss if he doesn't stand to gain significantly from a success? Would John have us accept the worst of both worlds and none of the best?

Where I think John is farthest off-base is when he criticizes comic book creators who won't create under the work-for-hire system, who hold back their talent rather than sell it cheap. John mentions the loss of good work to the arts, but does not consider what the fans have to gain in the long run, when comic books are produced by creators who enjoy and share in what they're creating rather than working in a predatory, factorylike environment. Ideas are not perishable goods; they can be stored indefinitely and will be realized later if not this month or tomorrow—whenever the climate is right for their fruition. John fantasizes about one day getting paid for merchandising use of his characters; this fantasy can become fact, but creators cannot just sit back, accept what is handed to them on a plate, and wait for the companies to see the light.

Refusing to work under an unfair system is the best way in the world to get it changed. And when that happens—as it is beginning to do, thanks to the malcontents and rebels—then the complacent John Byrnes of the industry will profit as much as the rest of us.

Jan Strnad

On Jack Kirby

Dear Bob,

. . . Howard Zimmerman's article/interview with Jack Kirby was more than a bit disturbing. If Mr. Kirby has been led to believe that there was some sort of conspiracy to sabotage his books at Marvel in the 1970s, then someone has played a cruel joke on the man.

When I started working at Marvel in December of 1975, standard operating procedure was to basically let Jack do whatever he wanted. As far as I know, the only man who discussed the direction of the books with Mr. Kirby was that month's editor-in-chief (there were about four of them during the entire period). Hell, the whole office, yours truly included, looked upon Jack as a comics demi-god. Most of us would have been afraid to talk to him, much less try to undermine his books.

As for the idea that competing writers filled the pages of Jack's bogks with overly critical letters—"knock letters" as Jack called them—well, nothing could be further from the truth. To the best of my recollection, the letters pages to Jack's books were assembled by then-staffer Scott Edelman and neo-writer David Anthony Kraft, though I put together a few myself. Certainly none of us coveted Mr. Kirby's assignments, nor were we in any position to have even dreamed of assuming them.

Not fully trusting my memory on this, I checked back over the old letters pages to see just how negative the printing in print was. In *Captain America* and *Black Panther*, I found that over two-thirds of the mail response were out-and-out raves; an impressive statistic when one considers that the previous writers associated with those two series—Stephen Englehart and Donald McGregor—had such a rabid fan following. On the *2001* book, mail was about 75% positive. In the only letters page to run in *Machine Man* during Jack's tenure, mail was 100% positive. I could find only four negative letters in the entire run of the *Eternals*, and one of *those* was from a reader who felt the book raised troubling theological questions.

On the matter of original art, I believe it was already Marvel's policy to return originals to the creative team when Mr. Kirby signed back on with the company in the mid-'70s. And, unless his contract contained some special clausp stating otherwise, then his inkers were also entitled to their fair percentage of the pages. The statement that Jack will be receiving all of the original art to the *Destroyer Duck* strip is puzzling. Does this mean that Alfredo Alcala, who is supposedly inking the strip, will receive none of the originals? That hardly seems equitable!

Moreover, I find it hard to believe Mr. Kirby's claim that he wrote all of the early

Marvels. It has never been disputed that he plotted or co-plotted many of the strips, but the stories I've seen that were credited to Stan Lee certainly *read* like they were written by Stan Lee. They most certainly *didn't* read like they were written by Jack Kirby!

I do agree with Jack's statement that the industry needs more innovation, new structures, and better incentives. I'd like to point out to him that such things are, however belatedly, coming to pass. I further refer him to your second issue report on the new Graphic Novel contract, to the new royalty incentive plans at both DC and Marvel, and to John Byrne's well-reasoned essay on creator's rights . . . and wrongs!

I don't wish to have this soul-raised I'm-down on Jack Kirby. There are few people in the comics industry whom I more admire and respect. I must point out, through, that he is laboring under some misconceptions which can only do him harm. And I certainly don't want to see that!

I am overjoyed to see Jack back to doing what he does best . . . comic books . . . and applaud Pacific Comics for giving him the outlet.

Roger Stern

Dear Bob,

. . . So far COMICS SCENE is a good *idea* for a magazine, but it falls short in several areas. Not the least of these is a good solid grasp on journalism, the simple awareness that you are casting yourselves in the role of reporters, and it is the job of reporters to disclose the *facts*. Personal opinion, of course, has its place in a magazine like this, but it must always be clearly labeled as such, as with you little disclaimer on Howard Cruse's column, or the editorial notice on David Gerrold's philosophical wanderings in STARLOG.

Your article on Jack Kirby, for instance, was so full of inaccuracy and muddled retellings of events that it was almost unreadable. Example: when I started at Marvel in 1974 they had already established a policy of returning artwork to the artists and writers involved. Kirby makes it sound as if he had to fight for the return of his work after he came back to Marvel in 1976, and this is reported as true. You owe more in-depth reporting to your readers. Unfortunately, since Marvel, Jim Shooter, Stan Lee, and probably myself by now, are branded as corporate bad-guys the majority of your readers will probably take every word of the Kirby article as gospel.

Elsewhere, on a purely personal level I was surprised to discover Joe Sinnott cannot accept my rendition of the Thing. My interpretation is based on its entirety on issue #51 ("This Man, This Monster") of the *Fantastic Four*, a story which will stand forever as definitive in the eyes of most fans, I think. Oddly enough it was something Joe said to me shortly after we first met that set me leaning towards this particular version of the Thing. Joe was musing nostalgically, at my encouragement, upon the "good old days" with Jack, and he commented that the major fault in the current portrayal of the Thing was that he had become a big orange teddy-bear. I'm really sorry you don't care for my version, Joe. It's every bit as much a tribute to you as to Kirby.

John L. Byrne

Needless to say, John, your indictment of our professionalism is a serious cause for concern around here. We are striving for total professionalism, in a feature, interview and news magazine that is entertaining and informative.

But I feel that your negative reactions were due in part to a misconception. You see, there is as big a difference between a news report and a feature interview as there is between an interview and a Guest Spot column. Had the Kirby story been a news report or an historical piece on Marvel in the '70s, it would have been incumbent upon us to dig for and—as you put it—". . . discredit the facts." It would have been necessary to speak with Stan Lee, Marvel's legal and accounting departments, and many other people—such as yourself—who were working there during that period.

Had it been a hard-news story, it may have been necessary to tell Kirby that his memory, his version of what went on, differed dramatically from other people's recollections; or to say (for argument's sake) that the records show that 63½% of all original artwork was returned to the artists during the decade, and then ask Kirby to comment on that. But this was not the purpose or function of the Kirby story. It was simply (and, we thought, obviously) a study of a man whose contributions are central to the industry in which he works. Any "muddled retellings of events" to which you refer are Kirby's quoted recollections. He is entitled to them. The readers are entitled to have them recorded in print.

If other people wish to set the record straight by offering an alternative, perhaps more accurate, reconstruction of events, they are eagerly invited to do so—as you have—by writing to the letters column.

Howard Zimmerman

You Missed One

Dear Mr. Greenberger,

. . . In writing your Editorial I feel that you omitted a significant outlet for aspiring writers and artists, *The Charlton Bullseye*. I must presume that you are not aware of the project being undertaken at Charlton, so I will quickly outline it.

Just over a year ago I went up to Connecticut and talked to Editors George Wildman and Bill Pearson about the concept of publishing my work on a non-paying basis, the point being was obviously to obtain the experience and exposure necessary to work for Charlton and/or DC Comics. Since then seven issues of the bi-monthly *Charlton Bullseye* have appeared with no end in sight. I did the first and seventh issue and other non-professionals (some of outstanding quality) did the other five. Charlton is now seriously considering making the book monthly because of its outstanding success.

Since that time a year ago I've done a seven page Captain America story for Marvel, a four page horror story as well as several splash pages for the *House of Mystery* at DC. The point being that *Bullseye* is a successful training ground.

I suggest you inform your readers of this unique opportunity for the young artists and writers.

Dan Reed
1600 N.W. 119 St.
Miami, Fla. 33167

The First Royalty Program

Dear Robert,

. . . Congratulations on another fine issue of COMICS SCENE. I really appreciated the coverage which you are giving the alternate press.

There are two subjects which I would like to discuss. First, on page 7, column 4, bottom right hand corner, last paragraph: "One comic professional" (no name given) assumes that the small press may not survive because of royalties given by the major publishers. I should like to comment on this subject. Pacific Comics has a royalty program for our creative teams (artist, writer, inker, editor). We had this program six months before DC announced their royalty terms. I firmly believe that our program is far more equitable in that not only do we offer a royalty if sales exceed 90,000 copies, but our artist *owns* his own characters outright. The big motivation for our artist is the possibility of reaping additional monies from merchandising his characters. Each artist owns all exploitation rights.

Pacific Comics is in a unique position, a positive position, with the comics industry. We can afford to experiment and we can afford to take risks.

We hope to have six regular, bi-monthly titles out by the end of 1982, not to mention a series of one-shot titles and mini series.

Second, I should like you to give credit to Steve Oliff for the fine coloring he does for Pacific Comics. He should have been given a credit on page 28 of COMICS SCENE #2.

Steve J. Schanes
Art Director
Schanes and Schanes ■

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Comics Reporter

DC COMICS

The Order Changeth...Again

PHOTO: DEBORAH UPTON

PHOTO: JOHN CLAYTON

Marv Wolfman, left, has become DC's first writer/editor in an editorial reorganization that has also elevated Paul Levitz, above, to the position of Vice President-Operations. The company has continued to expand into the areas of marketing and special projects.

Since last issue went to press, DC has gone through numerous administrative changes, effecting several of the new titles on the schedule. Topping the list, Paul Levitz has been named Vice President-Operations, joining V.P.-Editorial Director Joe Orlando in the top ranks. Levitz is working on building up a marketing department that will work with both newsstand dealers and direct sales outlets. Two members of this team have already been brought in: Declan Mulcahey, who will handle administrative duties including the royalty payment program; and Mike Flynn, who will handle press relations and promotions.

Neal S. Pozner joined the staff on March 22 as their Design Director. A long-time comics fan, Pozner has done freelance work for DC in past years. He will be responsible for the look of the company's products, especially the special projects.

To handle the expanding editorial load, Marv Woldman has been made a Senior Editor, working two and a half days a week with Ernie Colon, who will act as a Jr. Editor. Currently, the pair handles *Flash, Green Lantern, World's Finest, Wonder Woman* and *Night Force*, but they expect their load to eventually increase to eight titles. Astute readers will notice that Wolfman will be a writer/editor on *Night Force*, a position neither DC nor Marvel has had in years. "The best comics have always been produced by writer/editors," Wolfman asserts. "People like Will Eisner, Al Feldstein, Harvey Kurtzman and Stan Lee were all writer/editors. The only reason some people don't like the position is that they're more into power than producing good books. DC is more interested in producing good books."

Managing Editor Dick Giordano explains that the move was made to properly utilize available talent rather than seek out and train new talent. In this manner, Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway have also been made writer/editors but only on books that they have created. Thomas will do *Arak, Son of Thunder* and *Captain Carrot*, while Conway will handle *Firestorm*. (Thomas is giving up scripting *Wonder Woman* to handle the load. Van Mishkin will be the new writer.) Giordano will oversee the work all three are doing, promising that they will be treated like all other editors without any special attention given or taken away.

Giordano mentioned that Frank Miller will probably edit his own series when he begins doing work for DC later this year. Miller has agreed to produce, write and draw his own creation which will be sold in the direct sale outlets only. The first such direct-only project will be the maxiseries *Camelot 3000*, in September.

As a result of the shuffles, two announced series will be put on the back burner until time can be made for them. *Amethyst, Princess of the Gem World* is being saved for Colon, and Len Wein is asking for more time on his *Pandora Pann*, so both will most likely appear in early 1983. Replacing *Gem World* on the schedule is *Arion, Lord of Atlantis*. The Paul Kupperberg-Jan Duursema project has been a back-up feature in *Warlord* and concludes its run there with issue 62. That story will lead readers into the first issue, scheduled to premiere in August. Editor Laurie Sutton explains that *Barren Earth*, a far-future vision of Earth, will replace *Arion* in *Warlord*. That series will be by Gary Cohn and Ron Randall.

Sutton also left DC at the end of April to pursue a novel. Her workload is being divided among Karen Berger (*Gem World, Legion of Super-Heroes*), Ross Andro (*Warlord*) and Julie Schwartz (*Arion*).

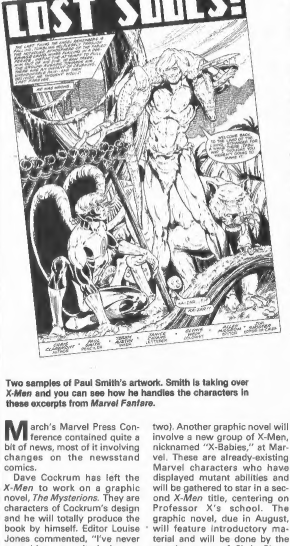
Another new title coming in the summer will be a revival of *Blackhawk*, edited by Wein, written by Mark Evanier and drawn by Dan Spiegle. The stories return Blackhawk to World War II where the comic was most successful. Wolfman said that *Dr. Fate* has been removed from the back of *Flash*, pending a possible title of his own. A replacement series has not been selected yet. Wolfman added that *Green Arrow*'s series was being moved from *World's Finest* to *Detective Comics* with Batgirl being sent into limbo.

Giordano commented that DC's expansion is being very carefully planned and while he is eager to try new formats, different paper stock and new characters, he is aware of the need for careful planning. He is currently leaning towards a set of annuals for Christmas time that would experiment with different formats similar to Marvel's *Fanfare* or *G.I. Joe*.

Pointing to his wall full of upcoming covers, he points out that DC only has five comics featuring superheroes whose names appear as the titles. This is something he wants to expand and work on in coming months. Making room for the expansions means further cancellations, with *Weird War Tales* being the only title mentioned so far. Giordano says DC has determined that the newsstand dealers can only handle 30 titles before sales begin to affect one another. On the other hand, DC is working on introducing an additional six titles specifically for the direct sales market and DC will expand in this area for as long as there is room.

Commenting on the growth, Giordano says there isn't enough talent. He has been working for months now with new artists in a workshop setup and has been making plans on setting up a workshop for writers. One of Wolfman's responsibilities will also be to work with new writers and train them. Between the two programs, and Giordano's trip to England this spring, he hopes enough new talent will be found to help fuel DC's growth and expansion into all new areas.

Shaking Up the Artists, Titles



Carol Kalish, who joined March 1 as his assistant, will handle all his duties until the direct sales department can be reorganized by circulation director Ed Shukin.

In other news: *a Red Sonja* limited series is in development and expected to premiere around August . . . Bob Layton and Denys Cowan comprise the new *Power Man/Iron Fist* team. They want to revamp the book, making it more atmospheric, and the first step will be a redesigning of Iron Fist's costume . . . *The Death of Captain Marvel* sold out very quickly and there was a second printing in late March. Direct sales outlets have increased their order for future graphic novels accordingly . . . Marvel will be sending editors, writers and artists out on promotional tours to hype the graphic novel series. If a club, school, store or anyone else wants to sponsor a party or autograph session in connection with a novel, they are asked to contact Carol Kalish at Marvel.

ventures of Indiana Jones. Other editor switches include Tom DeFalco picking up *G.I. Joe* and Denny O'Neill adding *Dazzler*. However, O'Neill is now without *Bizarre Adventures*, which is expected to fold after issue 32.

Marvel also announced at the press conference that their movie adaptations and X-Men/Teen Titans crossover will be presented in the format used on *Star-Lord* last November and *G.I. Joe* #1 in March. The cover price will normally be $2.50 but in special cases, such as with the crossover title, the price will be lowered to $2...

Mike Friedrich, who joined Marvel about two years ago to help develop and exploit the direct sales market, has left the firm. He went back to California in April to restart Star*Reach Productions. Friedrich said he will continue to have a working relationship with Marvel and will act as an editorial packager, citing the *Elric* graphic novel as an example.

ART © 1982 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

Two samples of Paul Smith's artwork. Smith is taking over *X-Men* and you can see how he handles the characters in these excerpts from *Marvel Fanfare*.

March's Marvel Press Conference contained quite a bit of news, most of it involving changes on the newsstand comics.

Dave Cockrum has left the *X-Men* to work on a graphic novel, *The Mysterions*. They are characters of Cockrum's design and he will totally produce the book by himself. Editor Louise Jones commented, "I've never seen him so excited about a project." Replacing him on the title will be newcomer Paul Smith, who has done work for *Marvel Fanfare*, *Doctor Strange* and a fill-in for *Iron Man*. Smith is expected to be the permanent artist on both *X-Men* and *Doctor Strange* for the immediate future.

Brent Anderson leaves *Ka-Zar* with issue number 20 in order to draw an *X-Men* graphic novel. Ron Frenz, who has done a fill-in already, will replace him. This is the graphic novel Neal Adams originally began work on but stopped as a result of contract disputes (see COMICS SCENE two). Another graphic novel will involve a new group of X-Men, nicknamed "X-Babies," at Marvel. These are already-existing Marvel characters who have displayed mutant abilities and will be gathered to star in a second *X-Men* title, centering on Professor X's school. The graphic novel, due in August, will feature introductory material and will be done by the creative team of Chris Claremont and Bob McLeod. The new monthly is expected to follow a few months after the novel.

Writers have also done some assignment-switching, leaving Denny O'Neill with *Iron Man* and *The Avengers* without Jim Shooter. Editor Mark Gruenwald is in the process of finding a new writer. Gruenwald has finally been assigned his books, which include : *Avengers, Captain America, Iron Man, Thor, What If?* and *Spider-Woman*. This leaves editor Jim Salicrup with Marvel's special projects: *Star Wars* and *The Further Ad-*

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ANIMATION

Elfquest Signs With Nelvana

After months of rumors and negotiations with Nelvana Productions, it appears that Richard and Wendy Pini have signed a deal for an animated feature film Nelvana is currently finishing work on their first full-length feature, currently called *Drats!*, and will then go to work on their adaptation of the Pinis' *Elfquest* series.

Nelvana first publicly mentioned the project last Thanksgiving and, since then, the two sides have worked out the fine points. The exact involvement of the Pinis is not known as yet but they will have full approval over character designs and story. The movie will be based on the first five chapters of the *Elfquest* comic, not up to #13 (due this summer).

Richard Pini said in late March that Playboy Press will be kicking off their trade paperback line with the first *Elfquest* novel.

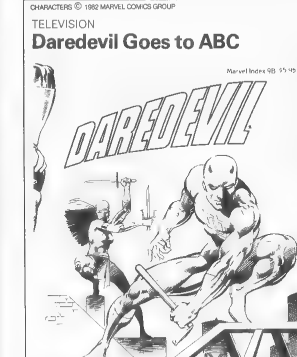
At presstime Wendy had just finished working on the cover painting. The novel, also based on the first five chapters, will be out in time for Christmas. Although Playboy has it on their November schedule, it should be showing up by October

Rumors have also been coming out of Hollywood that an animated feature is going to be made featuring Will Eisner's *The Spirit*. Although no one could confirm the information in early April, official word may be out as you read this. Gary Kurtz, who has just finished work on the Jim Henson feature *Dark Crystal*, is said to be producing the film, which will feature full-character animation and will take about three years to make. Some hot new writer/director will help the project and some pencil test animation has stirred up a lot of interest around the and/or studios. We hope to have more on this next issue

CHARACTERS © 1982 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

TELEVISION

Daredevil Goes to ABC



Pacific Comics completes their Marvel Index series with *Daredevil*. The wrap-around cover art was done by Frank Miller and Joe Rubinstein. Will he be the next TV superstar?

Daredevil is the latest four-color superstar to get a shot at the big time: a prime-time network TV series gig.

Warner Brothers Television is developing the property as a one-hour *live-action* series for ABC. If the network picks up the show, *Daredevil* would debut as a 1982-83 midseason replacement (premiering sometime between November 1982 and May 1983).

Marvel's Man Without Fear is in the hands of writer/producer Sterling Silliphant, Oscar-winning screenwriter for 1967's *In the Heat of the Night*. His other credits include *The Slender Thread*, *Charly* and *The Towering Inferno*, as well as classic episodes of TV's *Naked City* and *Route 66* (he served as story editor for both series).

According to his assistant, Nona Joy, Silliphant met several times with Stan Lee to discuss the comic's characters and concepts. However, before Silliphant could begin actual work on *Daredevil*, he was called to do a "quick rewrite" of *Travis McGee* when ABC unexpectedly green-lighted that dormant Warners project, requiring an immediate shooting script. The two-hour TV movie *Travis McGee* is also a series pilot for the 1982-83 season. Sam *(The Legacy)* Elliott stars as John D. MacDonald's private eye.

After completing the *Travis McGee* revisions, Silliphant returned to *Daredevil* and started writing a first draft teleplay in early March. He will also produce the show. No cast or other creative personnel have been selected

Additionally, *Daredevil* will not be filmed in the traditional pilot format. In an effort to reduce costs, the TV networks are increasingly turning to the "presentation method," authorizing a production company to shoot a 15-to-20 minute segment of the pilot script instead of a full one-hour, 90-minute, or two-hour program Such presentations are expected to adequately showcase the property's commercial elements and series potential—and, of course, these "demos" cost far less to produce than full-length pilots.

In this case, if *Daredevil* sells as a series, the presentation will ultimately be salvaged (to further reduce costs) by filming the pilot script's remaining scenes or, perhaps, by incorporating the completed segment into another episode. However, it's a different story if *Daredevil doesn't* become a series. Unsold full-length pilots eventually air as prime-time filler, but shorter presentations, with plot threads dangling, might never be broadcast. And that's a possibility which could unnerve anyone . . . even a Man Without Fear.

CHARACTERS

Dennis Campaigns Against Child Abuse

Hank Ketchum's mischievious child has embarked on a mission to prevent child abuse and neglect.

In a nationwide campaign begun earlier this year by the Health and Human Services Department, Dennis the Menace is the star of a 16-page color comic book called "Coping With Family Stress." The book, printed in English and Spanish ("Como Manejar La Tension Familiar"), offers parents a series of lessons and solutions to familial problems.

Each section begins with a stress point. For instance, "When children are deeply involved in some activity, it may be literally impossible for them to pay attention to us."

The point is followed by a strip. In this case, Dennis is mesmerized by a Western playing on his TV set. His mother asks him to wash his hands for dinner several times without success. Finally, she brusquely turns the set off. "I gave you *plenty* of warning," she tells him. "Yeah. But how am I supposed to know when you *mean* it?" he asks. A solution: "We need to pause and reflect when we get upset at our children—before we act."

According to the government, a conservative estimate is that one million children are abused or neglected by their parents or caretakers in the U.S. every year, and as many as 2,000 die as a result of maltreatment.

More than 550,000 copies of the book were printed at cost by Field Newspaper Syndicate and are available through Regional Child Abuse and Neglect Resource Centers.

Flexi-Comics and Much More

A page from the Brothers Hernandez.

FANTAGRAPHICS

In a move that is sure to raise a few eyebrows, Fantagraphics, publishers of *The Comics Journal* and this spring's *Gil Kane's Savage*, is releasing *Love & Rockets* by two relatively unknown artists. This bold move is an attempt on the part of publisher Gary Groth to expand the scope of his ventures and reach new audiences.

Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez have done the art and story for the 68-page comic, which is due to premiere in June for $2.95. About half the material appeared in a limited edition fanzine published by the Hernandez brothers last year. Groth saw the fanzine and, after writing a glowing review in *Journal #67*, arranged for an expanded edition. The stories are said to satirize all the concepts traditional comic book stones are based on.

Ms. Tree is surprised about getting her own magazine.

ETERNITY

Dean and Jan Mullaney have scored a major success with the first issue of *Destroyer Duck* and have started planning a series of continuing adventures to be written by Steve Gerber and drawn by Jack Kirby. The four-issue series should premiere towards the end of the summer.

Sabre, a six-issue, bi-monthly series based on the graphic novel by Don McGregor and Paul Gulacy, should premiere in May. *Scorpio Rose* by Steve Englehart and Marshall Rogers is set for a June release. The three issue bi-monthly will tell a complete story, although Jan says the ending allows for a continuation and he's fairly certain there will be more adventures of Scorpio Rose (a reworking of Madame Xanadu stories pulled away from DC).

Plans for the *Ms. Tree* magazine continue. It is still set for a June or July 1 release and will have text features along with comic stories. An as-yet-unnamed "name" artist will be doing the covers—but Eclipse isn't telling.

JUSTICE MACHINE

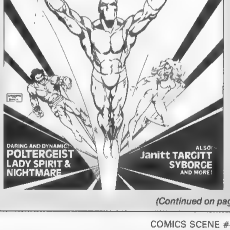
Issue four of *Justice Machine* will look very much like one of the old Ace doubles. It will feature two different covers, one spotlighting *JM* and the other Cobalt Blue. Cobalt Blue made his first appearance several years back in *Power Comics #1* (which also had early work by Wendy Pini and Dave Sim), and will be a new feature in *JM*.

Justice Machine Annual #1 will be out this summer and will be a unique venture. The Justice Machine will meet up with the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents, on loan from John C. Carbonero Productions. The 64-page, full-color story promises to be bristling with action and adventure.

Cobalt Blue makes a triumphant return.

ALTERNATE EXISTENCE

A brand new entry into the field, *Alternate Existence*, features a new set of super-powered characters in a series of solo stories. They have names like Poltergeist, Lady Spirit, Nightmare, Janitt Targitt and Syborge. Bill Black, Dan Reed, Mike Gustovich and others will be providing stories. The 64-page magazine will start off in black and white for $2 with the first issue due this June.



(Continued on page 65)

ANIMATION

Fantasia Reborn

Irwin Kostol conducts the Disney orchestra in March, rescoring *Fantasia*, after 42 years of continuous release. It's said this new score will last through the beginning of next century.

When *Fantasia* was first released in 1940, it was considered a major flop. It wasn't until 1969 that the film actually began to turn a profit and since that time it has been Disney's only animated feature to be in continuous release.

Recently, though, something new has been added—a state-of-the-art digital Dolby stereo soundtrack (conducted by two-time Academy Award-winner Irwin Kostal) in place of the original 1938 Leopold Stokowski score. This new sound track replaces the primitive and deteriorated original which was nearly a half-century old.

Fantasia began with the plan to make a *Silly Symphony* short of Paul Dukas' *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. Apparently Walt Disney was keen on using a big name conductor and fortuitously happened upon Leopold Stokowski, the conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra one evening in a restaurant. Stowkowski had gone to Hollywood to do five minutes in *The Big Broadcast of 1937* for Universal and to appear as himself in a major speaking role (as well as conducting) in *One Hundred Men and a Girl*. It was at this encounter over dinner that Disney broached the subject of *The Sorceror's Apprentice* and a possible collaboration.

Stokowski was so enthused by the project that he offered to work for nothing. Stokowski had worked with Bell Laboratories as early as 1931 to produce the first known stereo recordings of orchestral music. In Universal's *One Hundred Men and a Girl* (1937) Stokowski used RCA's "multiple channel recording system," though the film was released in mono

Stokowski was anxious to use any medium available to reach the people with his music. In the February 20, 1937 issue of *Liberty Magazine* he said: "Hollywood is the next logical step. Hollywood can do for music what all the conductors have never done. It can interpret a composition by actual pictures. It can make living what is now abstract." Exactly what Disney had in mind.

On January 10, 1938 at the Selznick Studio, Stokowski conducted *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, which was recorded in 6-track sound-on-film. Not long thereafter, it was decided that it was not economically feasible to produce *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* as a short and in February 1938 the idea of a full length *Concert Feature* began to emerge. By this time Disney was demanding not only top quality animation, but desired a unique sound system as well—something that would involve, engulf and surround the audience. This early experiment in motion picture stereophonic sound was dubbed Fantasound. The Fantasound recording equipment was shipped to the Academy of Music in Philadelphia to record the seven additional selections needed for Fantasia with Stokowski conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra

Fantasound involved 33 separate microphones scattered throughout the 110-member orchestra: these 33 microphones were mixed down into eight recording tracks—six tracks were devoted to individual sections of the orchestra, a seventh track recorded a complete mono mix down, the eighth track recorded a distant pick-up and a ninth track carried the click track which the animators wou d use for timing

In release, the tracks were mixed down to three tracks (left, right and center) and a fourth tone control track. The sound was on a separate film which had to synchronized with the picture. *Fantasia* premiered at the Broadway Theater in New York on November 13, 1940. The installation of Fantasound cost $85,000 and involved the placement of 36 speakers behind the screen and 54 others placed throughout the theater. The expense and the advent of World War II made such installations prohibitively expensive and electronic equipment hard to come by, so most moviegoers, saw *Fantasia* with mono sound.

In 1956 *Fantasia's* original sound tracks were transferred to magentic film with a fourth track added and in 1977 a stereophonic version was released. The new digital, Dolby stereo version conducted by Irwin Kostal made its debut this past Easter.

Prior to the recording sessions for this current released Kostal spent three months reviewing the film one frame at a time with sound editor Tomms Ricotta and veteran sound effects expert Jimmy Macdonald. The result was an elaborate "click track" which enabled them to approximate Stokowski's oftimes rapid tempo changes and thus match the music to the existing animation.

"Stokowski's freedom became my straightjacket," explains Kostal "When he did it the first time he did whatever he felt like doing because the animation camer later. This time around we had to work backwards."

Kostal was also able to make some corrections along the way. "We put Stokowski right," says Kostal. "Now when Stokowski gives a downbeat on screen, you hear it at the same time." Also, "Editors, through the years had made injudicious cuts—they lopped off the very first note of both the first and second movements of the *Pastoral* symphony—they lost parts of the music entirely."

The original Stokowski orchestrations have been retained with the exception of the *Toccata and Fugue* and *The Night on Bald Mountain* segments. The former has an orchestration by Kostal and the latter is "50% Moussorgsky, 25% Rimsky-Korsakov and 25% Kostal," explains Kostal. The recording approach for this new release is designed to simulate the presence of a concert orchestra in multi-channel stereo eliminating the "ping-pong" stereo effect and obvious dial-twiddling of previous recording engineers.

The new Disney recording in digital sound is now expected to last well into the next century

UNDERGROUND STATION: BY BRUCE SWEENEY

I would like to thank Tom Brmkman for his logo in CS *#3 and emphatically recommend his* Tatooed Paper *from him at 4 Cranberry Drive, Islip, N.Y. 11751. The recommendation is not a conflict of interest; it's sincerely one of his best publications. This month's logo is by my friend, Spain.*

RIP-OFF PRESS, Inc. (P.O. Box 14158, S.F. Ca. 94114) has obviously pressed Gilbert Shelton back into harness since his return from Europe. *Rip-Off Comix #10* features another Wonder Warthog story, a Fooblert Sturgeon piece and another Freak Bros. story; the *Freak Bros. in the 21st Century.* It also features Spanish cartoonists in its continued concern for providing international coverage

Rip-Off should also have the *Freak Bros. #7* out soon. The elusive Mr. Shelton has tentatively agreed to interview with us when his current projects are completed later this year.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS, 2 Swamp Rd., Princeton, Wi. 54968 has sent *Death Rattle* up to press which features a new Richard Corben cover; an 18 page story by *RAW* contributor Charles Burns, a George Metzger story, Steve Stiles' *Flabulent Fuggheaded Fied Bros.* and more for $1.75. *Spirit #34* is also on the way with an interview of Milton Caniff by Will Eisner and a Spirit story about Vietnam in 1950. It sells for $2.50

Kitchen will have *BOP #1* out in May which will feature a cover by John Pound and a back cover by Rick Geary. The book will be a quarterly magazine devoted to popular music. It will feature a seven page Trina Robbins story, *East Virginia Blues,* a six page story by editor Cat Yronwode, a one page by Harvey Pekar, a two page spoof of the Crumb blue cards by Dennis Lieberman and I will have material included as well. It will feature book and record reviews. The premier issue should be out now

Leonard Rifas of Educomics, Box 40246, S.F., Ca. 94140 dropped me a line to inform me that *Gen of Hiroshima* will be discontinued as a line. He hopes however to have a comic on hunger out by May. He will be publishing *I Saw It* by Nakazumi, the creator of the Gen series. It's the artist's own true story complete in 46 pages.

Raw #4 is out for $4.50 retail. (27 Greene St., N.Y., N.Y. 10013). It features 40 10½" x 14" pages; 4 of which are in color. It has Art Spiegelman, Charles Burns, Bill Griffith, Gary Panter and several other outstanding American and European artists.

Unfortunately, *The Real Art Letter of San Francisco* which featured such u.g. artists as Melinda Gebbie and designer Guy Colwell will be temporarily suspending regular publication due to a shortness of funds after six promising issues. They still intend to publish again on a more sporadic basis in the near future. Hopefully, more news on that later this year.

Last Gasp (2180 Bryant St., S.F., Ca. 94110) has released *Aftershock;* which is very much an international women's book. The theme is women of the future and features Trina, Noomin, Gebbie, Rudahl, Kominsky-Crumb and editor Becky Wilson who contributed a wraparound cover It was held up due to three of the contributors having babies. $2.50 pp.

Cocainne #4 has been completed by editor George DiCaprio and features many of the contributors to *#1-3* such as Greenwood and Chidlaw. Larry Todd's *Dog of a Man* is also out. Half of it is brand new and half is reprinted from previous ventures. Its 48 pages, 7" x 9" and retails for $2.

Slow Death #11 is out with a Greg Irons cover and story and *Weirdo #4,* edited by Robert Crumb, should be on the stands by now. Last Gasp is also stocking *All Night Comix,* a self-published 48 page single story comic by newcomer Tim Egan which sells for $2.

Robert Crumb has his second *Sketchbook* which runs 360 pages, 20 of which are color. It covers Crumb's 1966-1967 *Zap* period of previously unpublished work and retails for $25. He has also completed a new set of gumcards titled Early Jazz Greats, according to distributor Bud Plant, a new set of full color cards that picture and describe the great jazz artists and retails for $6.95. Bud is also enthusiastic about the new *Flights into Fantasy,* "a lavishly illustrated volume" of 160 pages of Richard Corben; 120 pages in full color which retails for $21.95. S Clay Wilson writes that he has just finished design/illustrations for the German edition of Burroughs' *Cities of the Red Night* which includes three illustrations; front cover lettering and drawing and a jolly roger back cover logo.

Everyman's *Tales of Mr. Fly,* above right *Bop* above and a mini from Comix World, above left

Everyman Studios (432 S. Cascade, Colorado Springs, Co. 80903) has resurfaced with a mini, *Tales of Mr. Fly,* by Bob Conway which has color covers and two short stories for 25¢ and a stamp. Everyman has completed a 5½ minute animated film "King's Elevator" which premiered at the Las Vegas International Film Festival in March and has been picked up for international distribution.

Comix World (Box 7081, Berkeley, Ca. 94707 has *Comix Wave #7* out for,$1.50 featuring

a Foster cover and material by Valentino, Roldo and others. (Valentino has a nice looking logo coming for this column.) *Comix World* also has a host of new minis available such as Dance of Death #3, Tales from the Inside #3, a new Babyfat and others.

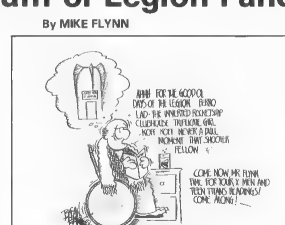
Knockabout Comix of Britain has released #3 with a great Hunt Emerson cover and material by Emerson, Smith, Harper and others as well as a new title, *The Adventures of Lazarus Lamb* by Ralph Edney. The latter is being carried by Last Gasp in this country.

Free Kluck Productions in Canada has a number of independent comix out or due soon including *Snafu #3,* Wired Tales, Weeder's Digest, Snapshot* and *Fish Story.* Steve Lafler, who recently contributed to Anarchy #3, has released Guts #2, which is self-published, features two stories and retails for $1.50 pp from the artist at P.O Box 982; Eugene, Oregon 97440.

Finally, the *U.G. Price Guide* (see last issue) is moving towards its final stages. Author Jay Kennedy was in California in April and finally got to meet some of the central early publishers like Ron Turner, Don Donahue, Gary Arlington and Peggy Rita. Several key people are working on introductions to the book such as George Erling, S. Clay Wilson, and Ron Turner. Now that the book has been announced, there has been a noticeable turndown in the sales of older undergrounds.

The Pendulum of Legion Fandom

By MIKE FLYNN


AHH! FOR THE 600TH DAY OF THE LEGION I HAD THE UNWORLD FOURTEAM CLUBHOUSE TO MYSELF ONL. NOW NOW, NEVER A DULL MOMENT THAT SHOOTER FELLOW!
COME NOW, MR. FLYNN! TIME TO TOUR THE MEN AND TEEN TITANS READERS! COME ALONG!
GRANDFATHER OF LEGION FANDOM

ALL ART BY BRIAN PEARCE

Legion of Super-Heroes fandom has been something of a special subgroup of comic fandom in general for the past decade or so. Those of us who have been at its core have felt that most particularly. We have seen Legion fandom convince DC Comics not to let the strip die (back in 1972 through 1974), seen it support more than one special interest publication for the fan market, and seen the special Legion issue of *Amazing World of DC Comics* sell out. And now, I have been asked to explain why Legion fandom grew the way it did, and why it now seems to have been replaced by *X-Men* and *New Teen Titans* fandom.

First, I suppose I should fill you in a little bit on my part in this whole mess. I am the accused founder of Legion fandom. More recently I have been referred to as the "grandfather of Legion fandom," a phrase I'm not certain I'm comfortable with. I am considered an expert on the subject, and a spokesman for those within. What I am really is a very impetuous individual, and all of this is an object lesson on how lack of forethought can have unpredictable results.

I was 13 in the summer of 1971. I wanted to write, badly, and anything. I was reading comics again, and the very first one I picked up after about a year's time was *Action* #392, which was the last Mort Weisinger edited. In its letter column, it was announced that "Tales of the Legion of Super-Heroes" would become an irregularly appearing second feature in *Superboy*. When I had been younger, *Adventure Comics* starring the Legion had been my very favorite comic book. I kept a notebook about the Legionnaires. I took photographs of myself and my collection. I memorized real names, home planets, titles and issue numbers. But now, in 1971, I was told that the strip I'd loved as a kid was going to be relegated to a secondary role. I was furious.

I wrote a letter. Its text is unimportant, but, as an afterthought, I added that anybody who felt the way that I did ought to write to me and join with me in forming a Legion of Super-Heroes Fan Club. By December, letters were trickling in, and by early 1972 there were one or two hundred members. Having all of those names and addresses did me little good, however, because I was A: 14 years old, B: only just remembering I had written the letter, and C: totally lost as to what to do about the situation.

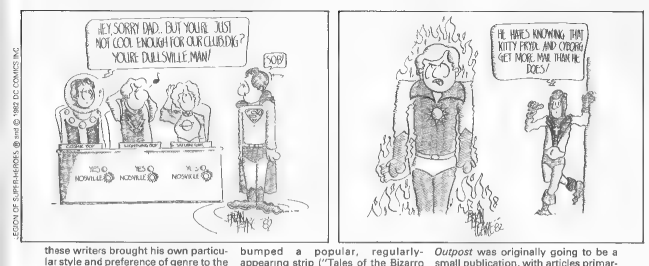
What I did was write another letter, this time to Legion Fan Club members. In it I proposed several missions for the club, among which was mounting a candy drive. That proposal was shot down, but I am frequently reminded by Legion fans who knew me then that I made such an outrageous proposal. But most important, and most lasting, were a letter writing campaign and a club newsletter, named *The Legion Outpost* after the old *Adventure Comics* letter column.

The question, of course, is why get so interested in a strip? It started with the first appearance of the Legion of Super-Heroes in *Adventure Comics* #247. In a story titled "The Legion of Super-Heroes," Superboy is confronted by three teenagers who taunt him by referring to his alter ego. When he catches up to them, they explain they are members of a super-hero club from the thirtieth century and invite him to try out. He is challenged to outperform three Legionnaires at tasks, one at a time, and loses each time. (He faces Cosmic Boy, Lightning Lad and Saturn Girl. Other Legionnaires were seen, but not identified.) Dejected, he turns away, but is called back, because the real test was his ability to take rejection with grace and in stride. From that point he was a member—and that was the last that anybody saw of the Legion for nearly two years, until *Adventure Comics* #267.

The Legion continued to make sporadic appearances in Superman family books (including some as adults) until the characters became so popular that editor Mort Weisinger acceded to popular demand and made the feature a regular one, beginning with *Adventure Comics* #300. From the start, then, the Legion was an unusual strip, since 20 years ago very few editors paid much attention to reader input. Even more unusually, Weisinger continued to listen to his readers throughout his remaining time at DC. Besides hiring one (E. Nelson Bridwell) to be his editorial assistant, he also used fan ideas for characters and allowed them to vote for the Legion's leader—thus determining at least part of the direction of the book.

The Legion ran for nearly seven years in *Adventure Comics* (#300-380). All but a few were penned by either Jerry Siegel or Edmond Hamilton until 1966, when Jim Shooter became the regular scripter. Each of

Michael Flynn recently joined DC as its new Promotion Manager.


HEY, SORRY DAD... BUT YOU'RE JUST NOT COOL ENOUGH FOR OUR CLUB DOG!
YOU'RE DULL SVILLE, MAN!
SORRY
NOSVILLE
NOSVILLE
NOSVILLE
HE HAVES KNOWING THAT KITTY PRYDE AND CYCLONE GET MORE MAIL THAN HE DOES!
EDITION OF SUPERMAN #076 © and ® 1982 DC COMICS INC.

these writers brought his own particular style and preference of genre to the strip. Siegel seemed to be most comfortable writing stories which incorporated the Superman family, and pitted the Legionnaires against Lex Luthor robots, Lex Luthor himself, and a thirtieth century descendant of Mr. Mxyzptlk. Hamilton, a science fiction writer of some stature from the early days of science fiction pulp magazines, concerned himself with stories in that vein. Both men helped to establish early on two of the strip's most important qualities: the Superman family connection and the liberal use of, if not immersion in, science fiction. Hamilton gave his readers pyramid men from Altair and weapons harnessing the energy of the entire universe; Siegel gave us Brainiac 5 as Batman Colorado. It's easy to see how the book would develop a following with those two ingredients.

What brought both these elements together was a youngster: Jim Shooter, a boy whiz kid from Bethel Park, Pennsylvania. During a hospital stay, Shooter read comic books and was convinced that he could write better stories than he read, and get paid to boot. Serendipitously, Weisinger was looking for a writer at the time, and the result was nearly four years of stories which were not only good comic writing, but transcendent, because they were written by someone who understood his audience. Jim Shooter *was* the audience! Years later, after becoming editor-in-chief at Marvel Comics Group, Shooter admitted that his Legionnaires often resembled his classmates in high school, coping with many of the same problems and at the same time trying to be super-heroes. Shooter will also say that he was influenced by the Marvel style. If you look back at his work in *Adventure*, it's not too hard at all to imagine Peter Parker joining the Legion.

In 1969, Weisinger again listened to his readers, this time to the detriment of the Legion. As the Legion had once bumped a popular, regularly-appearing strip ("Tales of the Bizarro World"), it was now being bumped to backup status in *Action Comics*. Supergirl was given the whole of *Adventure Comics*. With less space to work with, and Jim Shooter's subsequent departure, the heart of the strip seemed to have been taken away. When Mort Weisinger retired a year later, new editor Murray Boltinoff consigned the strip to limbo. Which is where it stayed until the advent of Legion fandom.

"Advent" is a misnomer, actually. As we have seen, Legion fandom existed from the word go, as far back as *Adventure Comics* #247, when readers who liked the characters wrote to ask for more stories and for the strip to get its own book. Fans of the Legion included readers like Cary Bates, Bob Rozakis and Nelson Bridwell, who later became DC writers. Fans mailed in "Bits of Legionnaire Business," speculated on how and why Triplicate Girl could split into three selves, debated character motivations, and argued the merits of straight adventure stories versus those which had a romantic interest. *The Legion Outpost* letter column in *Adventure* was a real forum in the 60s. There really was an interaction between the book's editors and its fans. And if you wanted to know *everything* about the characters, the letter column was a must. Sometimes something would be explained or revealed there and nowhere else. (For instance, that Triplicate Girl could triplicate because she came from Cargg, a planet with three suns.)

All of that seemed to remain with me when I wrote my letter. And I think that it rekindled a lot of that spirit, too, because soon after the Legion Fan Club semicoagulated it became more and more unusual to read the letter column in *Superboy* without seeing reference made to the Legion or the Fan Club. Some columns seemed to be exclusively devoted to Legion fans.

As for the newsletter, *The Legion Outpost* was originally going to be a small publication, with articles primarily revolving around the club and its membership, as well as methods of getting the Legion to become a regular feature somewhere, ideally in its own book. One of the early members of the LFC was a Northwestern University journalism major named Harry Broertjes, at the time a significant four years older than me. I quickly acceded to his offer to help with the newsletter. The first issue was free to all members, and paid for by club member contributions. The second cost 35¢, with articles, fiction, and the beginning of a long standing *Outpost* tradition: amateur art. It's probably the only fanzine with a table of contents on its cover.

But originality it was enough, because our goal was to duplicate the feel of earlier Legion fans and get the Legion its own book. Broertjes and I trumpeted that theme in our *Outpost* columns. Soon it became a fanzine, before either or us really knew anything about fanzines or fandom. That's one thing unique about Legion fans—they seem to have been oblivious to the growing "organized" comic fandom, even after publication of *The Legion Outpost*. We became our own grapevine, gradually passing word to the others that such a thing existed—only to find that we were an anomaly within it.

By 1976, several of us became aware of apas. An apa is basically a group of comic book fans, or, for that matter, science fiction fans or movie buffs or whatnot, who publish fanzines only for those who belong to the apa. There are strict deadlines and minimum contributions, and one member is responsible for all of the record keeping and distribution of the copies. What happened was that others connected to the *Outpost* (Harry Broertjes, Rich Morrissey, Jay Zilber) began talking of such things, and joined one called *CAPA-alpha*. I realized that an apa was close to my

original conception of what I would have liked *The Legion Outpost* to have been. In June of the bicentennial year the first issue was put out by Rich Morrissey, barely worth the postage at 26 pages. Later, when the membership grew to 50 and a waiting list to join to 30, a mailing of 600 pages wasn't too uncommon. In that apa, titled *Interlac* (which is the intergalactic language of the thirtieth century) we talked about the Legionnaires, invented origin stories, sex lives, characters, interrelationships, Earth governments and thirtieth century physics. Not incidentally, we became great friends, corresponding, telephoning each other, and even travelling great distances to meet each other at conventions in Denver, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and San Diego as well as in New York.

Now, in addition to *Interlac* and the still-published *Outpost* (number 11 is due out sometime this spring, and you can get details from Harry Broertjes, 566 NE 20th Street, Apartment 12, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33305), another Legion fan club exists, as well as a second Legion apa called *Klordny*. Canadian Brad Horning founded both. When I spoke to him, I was surprised to find that his views on the Legion did not substantially differ from mine, despite the fact that we became acquainted with the strip in different eras. Brad had not even read any of the Jim Shooter stories that my generation of Legion fans consider quintessential—"Mordru the Merciless," "The Fatal Five," "The Escape of the Fatal Five," "The End of the Legion"—until well after he had read Legion stories written by Paul Levitz and Cary Bates. Yet he still liked the Legion.

At this point most of the uninitiated will ask: *why?* It's a question that most Legion fans have been asked time and time again, from fan and professional alike. Marv Wolfman once joined *Interlac* just to ask that one question. And, truth to tell, there are as many answers as Legion fans. In a perverse sort of way, that's the answer. Because there are a variety of Legionnaires and supporting charactres, there should be something for everyone. There was no runaway favorite when LFC members were asked to name one in 1973. And nobody ever said you had to like just one. I liked Braniac 5 and Karate Kid both, two characters who were complete opposites.

Part of liking the characters was Shooter's doing. After all, he had actually made them all discernable by basing them on his high school classmates. We either knew somebody like that, or were ourselves like that. It's easy to root for someone who reminds you of someone you know and like, and especially so if it's you in a fantasy role in the thirtieth century.

Of course the strip's setting was important. Kids in the 30s loved *Flash Gordon* and *Buck Rogers,* didn't they? The Legionnaires went to more planets than both of them combined, and met menaces more deadly than Ming the Merciless ever was. Space exploration was also very popular during the 60s. And Jerry Siegel's stories tied everything neatly together with the rest of the DC universe, so that nothing was too much out of the realm of the expected.

In fact, something that always bothered me was why nobody except Legion fans were asked to justify liking a particular feature. Did anyone ever ask Jerry Bails why he loved the Justice Society? Or you why you like your particular favorite?

Our particular favorite, Murray Boltinoff said once, received more mail than any other book at DC. In fact, that was true until very recently, when *The New Teen Titans* appeared, and now it receives the most mail at DC. But the decline of the Legion's popularity might first be traced back to artist Dave Cockrum's departure to Marvel Comics.

Cockrum liked drawing the Legion. But those were the days when artists were not given their original art back, as is the case today. Cockrum had wanted the two page spread from *Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes #200*, in which Duo Damsel and Bouncing Boy were married on Mars. DC said no to that, and one other request, and Cockrum went to Marvel, where he helped Len Wein launch the new *X-Men*. Many have said in recent years that *X-Men* was a Legion swipe, and that's probably due to Cockrum's seminal presence. Those who followed Cockrum to that book appear to have remained loyal readers. There is a logic to that. *X-Men* is about a school (instead of a club) of super-powered youngsters who can serve as role models just as easily as the Legion can. In fact, in the current run of the Legion strip, the Legionnaires are portrayed as old, looking almost as if they were in their mid-20s when Mike Grell drew the strip. Now there are *married* Legionnaires. There were no married couples in the junior and senior high schools I attended. Kitty Pryde of *X-Men* isn't married. On the other hand, she and Colossus flirt just like Phantom Girl and Ultra Boy used to.

The New Teen Titans has that same flavor. They have an oddly-shaped headquarters like the Legionnaires once did (an inverted rocketship, done away with in *Adventure #366*). Just as Dave Cockrum and Mike Grell were cult artists on the Legion, George Perez is with the Titans. That sort of co-creator insures a readership.

(Continued on page 64)

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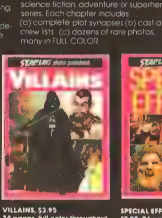

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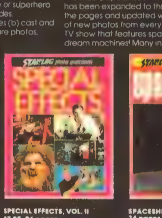

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BARNEY GOOGLE

Meet the man who gave us Spark Plug, Snuffy Smith and lots of laughs

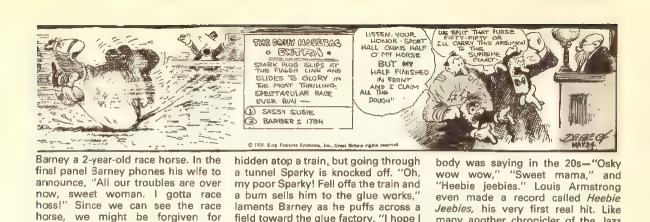
By RON GOULART

On the Fourth of July, 1919, Jess Willard was due to defend his heavyweight title against Jack Dempsey in Toledo, Ohio. Reporters and sports cartoonists started flocking to Toledo about the middle of June, where they visited the fighters' training camps, interviewed them and their managers, and turned out assorted columns, sketches and predictions. One of the cartoonists on the scene was 29-year-old Billy DeBeck of the Chicago *Herald-Examiner,* who'd been in the business for over a decade. What DeBeck produced while in Toledo was not sports panels but a new comic strip, initially about a henpecked husband who's obsessed with the Dempsey-Willard bout. It was entitled *Take Barney Google, For Instance* and first appeared on the sports pages of various Hearst newspapers around the country on Tuesday, June 17th. This was not DeBeck's first strip. On the launching of an earlier, and soon unsuccessful, one, he'd kidded that he was "looking forward to a life of luxury."

It's quite probable that in that summer of 1919 neither Billy DeBeck nor William Randolph Hearst had any notion of how successful *Barney Google* was going to be. During its run of 60-plus years, the *Barney Google* strip, now commonly called *Snuffy Smith,* has earned millions of dollars; and DeBeck's relatively short life was indeed one of luxury. Unlike some strips that have brought in considerable sums, *Barney Google* was well-drawn and well-written. In fact DeBeck, although not as well-remembered or celebrated as such contemporaries as Herriman and Rube Goldberg, was one of the best comic strip artists ever. He might never have gotten the chance to prove that, though, if he hadn't decided to give Barney a race horse.

Up until July of 1922 the *Google* strip had only dabbled in sports while concentrating on domestic and office situations. Just before launching this one, DeBeck had been doing a strip called *Married Life* and for a while it looked as though readers were just going to get more of the same. Barney (who kept getting smaller as the strip progressed) played the perennial loser who is browbeaten by a succession of sourfaced bosses and nagged by his enormous wife. But then, in a July 17th strip, Barney happens to walk by the Pastime Jockey Club just as a silkhatted gent is heaved out the window by some irate cronies. He lands on Barney rather than the hard concrete and in gratitude he gives

"BARNEY GOOGLE" Also Appears Daily In The New York Journal American


THE GRAND CONVENTION OF CENTAURS
SPARK PLUG SLIPS AT THE FINISH LINE AND ELUDES TO GLORY IN THE MOST THRILLING, SPECTACULAR RACE EVER RUN —
1 SASSY SUSIE
2 BARBER'S 17TH
LISTEN, YOUR HONOR - SPARKY HALL OWNS HALF OF MY HORSE
BUT MY HALF FINISHED IN FRONT
AND I CLAIM ALL THE DOUGH!
SURELY'S COUNSEL
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DERECK HAYES

Barney a 2-year-old race horse. In the final panel Barney phones his wife to announce, "All our troubles are over now, sweet woman. I gotta race hoss!" Since we can see the race horse, we might be forgiven for thinking Barney is overly optimistic. His name is Spark Plug and his meager frame is covered, down to the ankles, with a tacky horse blanket. Seeing Barney and his new horse, you might conclude that here was a pair of losers. But that would be a mistake, especially since you didn't know what DeBeck knew. "Spark Plug's pedigree dates back to the wooden horse used by the Ancient Greeks as a ruse to enter the City of Troy," he explained. "His ancestors carried Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon into the battles of history." Obviously then, when Barney enters such a horse in his first race, the famed Abababa Handicap, he's going to win. And he does, making Barney $50,000 richer.

From now on, for the next several years, the strip will be devoted to the career of Barney and Spark Plug. It's not all ease and luxury, though. Barney takes to wearing a silk hat and smoking a better grade of cigar, but there are times when he's too broke even to come up with the entry free for a race. And there are times when Sparky loses a race. On such occasions Barney is not above booting his nag in the backside. Theirs was a complex relationship, mixing exasperation and affection, much like that between parent and child. In one sequence Barney, broke again, is trying to sneak Spark Plug into Baltimore for a race. He gets the horse hidden atop a train, but going through a tunnel Sparky is knocked off. "Oh, my poor Sparky! Fell offa the train and a bum sells him to the glue works," laments Barney as he puffs across a field toward the glue factory. "I hope I won't be too late." He arrives as his horse is being booted out of the place for being too skinny. "You bum!" Barney tells him, shaking a fist at him. "You're not even good enough for a glue recipe!"

When DeBeck introduced Spark Plug, he also discovered the power of the words *to be continued*. You didn't need a socko gag every day if you got your readers hooked on the continuity. He built suspense, stretching a race across several weeks, sometimes making daily followers wait from Saturday to the following Monday to see if Sparky had won a particular race. Barney's wife had been dropped from the strip and DeBeck got many subplots out of Barney's courting of various pretty young ladies. Like many comedians of the silent screen, Barney never got the girl. Throughout the early and middle 1920s, he and his horse and his loyal black jockey, Sunshine, made a picaresque journey across America and even into foreign climes, racing, gambling, romancing. The plots got trickier, and the continuities ran for months as DeBeck involved his cast with all the fads and foibles of the Roaring 20s. At one point Spark Plug swam the English Channel.

DeBeck's drawing had a scratchy vitality and his dialogue made good use of slang and vernacular. He coined, or at least promoted, several catch phrases that just about everybody was saying in the 20s—"Osky wow wow," "Sweet mama," and "Heebie jeebies." Louis Armstrong even made a record called *Heebie Jeebies*, his very first real hit. Like many another chronicler of the Jazz Age, Billy DeBeck was both cynical and sentimental. His Barney Google was a hardboiled softie, too, suspicious that almost everything was a con and yet always willing to take in waifs and strays.

The public became fascinated with the strip, especially with Barney's woebegone horse. The title was soon changed to *Barney Google and Spark Plug* and Sparky became the Snoopy of his day. "Spark Plug, I am happy to say, has caught on," DeBeck was able to announce in an introduction to an early collection of strips. "All over the United States you find stuffed Spark Plugs and Spark Plug games and Spark Plug drums and Spark Plug balloons and Spark Plug tin pails. And there is a Spark Plug play on the road. . . . The only thing I can do in return for the kindness of the public in buying all this junk is to do my best to make the cartoons funnier and funnier." There was a hit song, too, written by Billy Rose and Con Conrad, celebrating Spark Plug and "Barney Google with his goo-goo-googly eyes." DeBeck saw to it that characters sang the song in the strip. He was now living a life that somewhat paralleled that of Barney Google in his affluent phase. He lived well, acquired homes in Long Island and Florida, traveled to Europe and devoted himself to such hobbies as golf. All this took him away from the drawing board, causing missed

WOL' ON A MINUTE, MR. SNUFFY- I-I AIN'T GOT A THING AGAINST YOU—N-NO, SIREEE- YOU'RE DANL'S UNCLE AN' I KEEP TELLIN' THE B-BOYS IT'S ONLY HUMAN THAT YOU SHOULD WANT TO BE HERE FOR DANL'S WEDDIN'— YES SIREE - I WANT TO HAVE A CONFIDENTIAL TALK WITH YOU SOMETIME, SNUFFY
JES' WHUT AIR TH' MEANIN' OF WORD, "CONFEDERDENTIL ?" I NEVER HEERED SICH BIG TALK AFORE IN ALL MAH BORNED DAYS—
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I WANT TO BUY A GENUINE NECKLACE OF PEARLS AND A DIAMOND TIARA
AHH ! WHO IS THE FORTUNATE LADY, MR. GOOGLE ?
LADY — ??
I'M BUYING 'EM FOR A HORSE!
DEBECK
12-28
Copyright 1922, by King Features Syndicate, Inc.

deadlines and conflicts with editors. One King Features editor is said to have hauled DeBeck off to a hotel in Atlantic City, taken his pants and locked him in until a week of new strips was turned out.

A comic artist in the 20s had a lot of elbow room. Daily strips ran six columns wide and several inches high, and on Sunday there was an entire page to fill. In the mid-20s, especially at King Features, many Sunday pages began devoting ¾ of their space to the main strip and the top ¼ to a different feature. DeBeck's first topper was *Bughouse Fables,* based on a daily panel he'd been doing. The simpleminded premise, with characters acting against type (misers being generous, kids loving homework, etc.), didn't play too well in an extended format. In May 1926 he substituted a feature called *Parlor, Bedroom & Sink.* DeBeck seemed to have an affinity for starting strips off as domestic comedies and then switching to continuity and suspense. Within five months *Parlor, Bedroom & Sink* became a wild and wooly burlesque of stage melodramas and silent cinema tearjerkers. Finally, late in 1927, Bunker Hill, Jr. appeared on the scene and soon pushed his parents, up until then the long-suffering stars of the saga, far into the background. Bunky remained a baby throughout the strip's long run, but such a baby as comic pages had never seen. Philosophically he was a cross between Little Orphan Annie and Candide; in appearance he was a midget Jimmy Durante in swaddling clothes. Although Bunky almost always appeared in a lacetrimmed baby bonnet and dress, he spoke in a most precocious and impressive manner. "Ah! The pity of it, the shame of it. . . . Rather would I be alone again in POVERTY than rich as Croesus while my poor dear father and poor dear mother struggle for their daily biscuits," he laments during a separation from his loved ones. When they try to make him a movie star, Bunky runs away, booties sending up puffs of dust, stating, "My destiny is surely greater than the role of clown for a fickle mob!"

Early in 1928, DeBeck created a worthy antagonist for his put-upon little hero. Apparently an admirer of Charles Dickens, DeBeck has Bunky fall into the grubby clutches of a character he describes as "a vicious, unscrupulous 'Fagan.' "[sic] This quintessential lout is big, mean and always looks like a bum, even when one of his wicked schemes makes him momentarily rich. When the conscience-stricken Bunky pleads that he can't beg on the streets, Fagan instructs him, "If-ya can't beg ya gotta steal! Hop over there and snitch that guy's watch and chain. Quick now, before I flog you again." The somewhat ambivalent relationship continued, off and on, for their rest of the 1920s and all through the 1930s. While Fagan's moral habits never were able to rub off on the forever innocent Bunky, some of his speech habits did. We often find Bunky informing him, "Fagan, youse is a viper!" Most of the stops were pulled out for this little Sunday epic and DeBeck dealt with murder, arson, kidnapping, robbery and all sorts of lower depths predicaments. He mixed in fantasy, too, on occasion, even having Bunky spend considerable time with a colony of talking dogs. At one point in the early-30s the little waif is allowed to adopt the famous Spark Plug.

The fun he was obviously having with all this began to spill over into *Barney Google.* In the late 1920s DeBeck incorporated mystery and melodrama in the strip. After several such continuities, including one involving a secret society and one where Barney substitutes for a millionaire and is nearly railroaded into the booby hatch by nasty relatives, he concocted a full-length murder mystery. This daily adventure commenced September 1930 and ran on until April 1931. The intricate yarn involved Barney with an aging femme fatale named Madame LaMousse, a lady who was attended by a giant black servant and who kept "ferocious leopards and tigers as her pets." There was also a crooked lawyer named Zitz, an even more crooked senator named Schnopps, Opal Showers, the senator's innocent blonde secretary, and Elisha Powers, Opal's poor but honest suitor. Barney is briefly taken with the seductive Madame LaMousse, who loves to call him "bubble eyes." He soon realizes, however, she's too sinister for him and attempts to extricate himself from the whole mess. By the time he does, Madame has been murdered, Elisha is a fugitive from the law and Barney has had to play detective. DeBeck, obviously enjoying this sequence, stopped the narrative now and again to insert breathless synopses of what had been going on. He even tossed in a political cartoon attacking the corrupt Senator Schnopps. When the story finally ends, there is a daily wherein all the characters, alive and well again, step forward on a stage to take a bow. "And so ends the play. The players respond to their last curtain call before seeking their separate paths in this

busy world."

It's possible that all this was too heady and quirky for an audience more used to the straightforward humor of *Mutt & Jeff* and *Bringing Up Father.* At any rate, DeBeck brought back Spark Plug later that year and Barney returned to the turf. The next year found him managing the Sultan of Sulu, who wrestled under the name of Sully. 1934 was to be a fateful year for Barney Google. He started it off, decked out in a suitable uniform, being supreme dictator of a Caribbean island. Then he is suddenly summoned to the states by a firm of attorneys and informed he is sole heir to an estate in North Carolina. After asking "Is the property worth more'n the R.R. fare?" Barney heads for Carolina to see what he's inherited. He arrives there on June 16th to find himself owner of a ramshackle cabin in the heart of hillbilly country. Al Capp, by the way, would be setting up shop on similar terrain two months later with *Li'l Abner.*

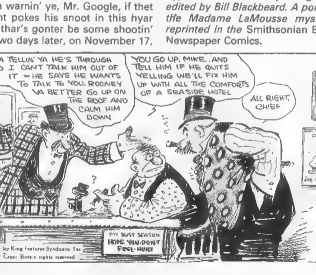
There was, in fact, considerable interest in that sort of life style at the time. Just the year before, *Tobacco Road,* the hit play based on the Erskine Caldwell novel, had caused a sensation on Broadway. DeBeck himself had long been interested in the folklore of the mountain people and his young assistant, Fred Lasswell, was something of a character as well. Barney's first adventures in this rural milieu get him tangled in a feud and then he plays an uncle role in a romantic triangle featuring a virtuous country girl, a virtuous country boy and a rich and handsome young "furriner." The country girl and boy decide to marry and there is going to be a huge wedding. The only snag, as a hulking, bearded, guntoting hillbilly points out to Barney, is, "SNUFFY SMITH . . . I heered he wuz comin' t' th' weddin' . . . I'm warnin' ye, Mr. Google, if thet varmint pokes his snoot in this hyar holler thar's gonter be some shootin' . . ." Two days later, on November 17, Snuffy and his wife arrive on the scene amid much gunfire. "Interducin' th' Smiths—Snuffy an' Lowizie hev kem all th' way frum greasy creek ter be hyar wen their nephew gits merried . . ."

Snuffy, who is the same size and shape as Barney, is a cantankerous, short-tempered and mean-minded fellow. Initially he thinks little of Barney and his citified ways, suspecting he is probably "tetched in th' haid." When it looks like Barney is going back on a deal, Snuffy warns him, "I'll give ye jes' two minits ter kem acrost with the $200—er I'll grind yer skull ter pieces with my boot-heel, like ez ef ye wuz a copperhead." All in all he behaves like a hillbilly version of Fagan, and yet there is something appealing and likeable about Snuffy. He begins, from his first day, to steal the limelight and he gradually makes the formerly feisty and outspoken Barney look quite sedate and conservative. His advent perked up the strip, just as Spark Plug had over a decade ago, and by the end of the 1930s the title is *Barney Google and Snuffy Smith.*

Although their subsequent joint ventures were usually of an earthy nature, DeBeck managed occasionally to introduce mystery or fantasy. There was a Sunday continuity about a flying horse and one about a tribe of magical little flying hillbillies called Feather Merchants.

By this time Barney was making only token appearances. Billy DeBeck died in November of 1942 at the age of 52. The Google character has continued to appear in the strip, in comic books and on TV cartoons. But the real Barney died with DeBeck.

Little of DeBeck's work is currently in print. Roughly a year of pre-Sparky dailies can be found in the 1977 Hyperion Press Barney Google *book edited by Bill Blackbeard. A portion of the Madame LaMousse mystery is reprinted in the* Smithsonian Book of Newspaper Comics. ■


I'M TELLIN' YA HE'S THROUGH AND I CAN'T TALK HIM OUT OF IT — HE SAYS HE WON'T TO TALK TO YOU, BROADWAY YA BETTER GO UP ON THE ROOF AND CALM HIM DOWN
YOU GO UP, MIKE...AND TELL HIM IF HE QUITS YELLING WE'LL FIX HIM UP WITH ALL THE COMFORTS OF A SEASIDE HOTEL
ALL RIGHT CHIEF
IS SAYS COMIN
IS SAYS SOMEBODY
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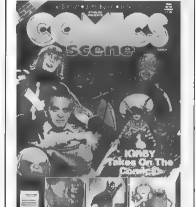
HOPE YOU DON'T FEEL HUNGRY
BUT SOMEBODY

Because you demanded it



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Around the World

Osamu Tezuka's World

Part Two

By JIM WHEELOCK

In the last issue of COMICS SCENE, we introduced you to the amazing world of Dr. Osamu Tezuka, the man the Japanese call their "Walt Disney." Still active today, Tezuka revolutionized the Japanese comics industry in the 1940s and 50s with his dynamic movie-influenced story-telling techniques and his popular characters. Moving into animation, he brought his greatest creations to the television screen: *Tetsuwan-Atom*, known to us as *Astro-Boy*, and *Jungle Tatei*, which ran here as *Kimba, the White Lion*.

In the years before Tezuka founded his own studio, Mushi Productions, he created numerous best-selling comic book serials. His work, heavily influenced by the animated works of Disney and Max and Dave Fleisher, came to the attention of Toei Doga, one of Japan's largest film companies, in 1959. They were interested in adapting his 1953 version of a Chinese folk-tale called *The Monkey King*. Tezuka, who had been experimenting with animation on his own, saw this as his big chance.

"I wrote *The Monkey King*, and the strip was a great success," he told us. "The Toei people wanted to adapt it and have someone else direct it. I said 'No.' I made a condition on selling the rights that I would direct it. It's like the case of Michael Crichton with *Westworld*."

The film appeared in 1960 as *Saiku-Yi* and was the most successful Japanese animated feature of its time. Tragically, the film was totally re-edited when it was brought to America by American International Pictures. "Celebrity" voices were added, including that of comedian Jonathan Winters, as well as a truly abysmal musical score. While certain scenes retain their quality, the film, known as *Alakazam the Great*, has been accurately listed as one of the 50 Worst Films of All Time.

Tezuka received co-director credit on *Saiku-Yi*, and continued to work on projects at Toei, including *Sinbad no Baden (Adventures of Sinbad)*. Of these he says: "There were several features based on comics of mine which I was involved with, but they weren't my films. They were movies that Toei was making, and I gave them my participation . . . But the first film I ever made was called *The Story of a Certain Street Corner*. It has probably not been released here, because it was a very strange and experimental film. That was in 1961."

Aru Machikado no Monogatari was a 40-minute theatrical cartoon, an anti-war allegory that, as Tezuka intended, brought public and critical attention, and financial backing, to his new-born Mushi Productions. The studio, developing on the limited animation techniques of the Hanna-Barbera studio in the U.S., was the beginning of the Japanese TV animation in-

Above: Cleopatra before she became known as *Queen of Sex*, scared of Mark Antony. Right: The heroes of *Phoenix 2772* in action.

Tezuka's sense of design is evident in this scene from *Phoenix 2772* as the craft flies away from a city set amongst the rocks.

dustry, today the largest in the world.

It was at Mushi that Tezuka brought *Tetsuwan-Atom* and *Jungle Tatei* to life. He also produced several lesser, but very interesting series.

OTHER TV SHOWS

W-3, known in the U.S. as *The Amazing Three,* was made in 1965. It followed the adventures of three aliens who travel to Earth as a rabbit, a horse, and a duck, studying humanity to see if they are too violent to be allowed space travel. *Princess Knight (Ribon no Kishi),* in 1967, was a beautifully designed color series about a young princess in a fairy tale kingdom who must pretend to be a male for political reasons.

Vampire was a 1968 Mushi series that combined live actors with animated characters. In the story of a band of were-creatures out for vengeance on humanity, and of the good werewolf who opposed them, the monsters were animated and the rest of the program was done with live action. "I could never get the actors to behave the way I wanted to," Tezuka says today. "So I gave up on that technique."

Tezuka returned to feature films in 1969 with *Senya Ichiya Monogatari (A Thousand and One Knights)* and in 1970 with *Cleopatra (Cleopatra, Queen of Sex).* He had been active in the development of the "adult" comic books in Japan, and sought a more mature audience with these films.

"I had only made what I considered children's films up till then, and so I really wanted to do cartoons for adults. I knew that I wanted to make animated films with some kind of sexual portrayal.

"Originally, the opening of *Cleopatra* took place in the future, when the Earth was invaded by people from another planet, and the Earthlings had no strategy to oppose them. They created a Time Patrol, who went back through history, looking for a clue to defending themselves.

"They discovered that the best example lay in ancient Egypt, when the Egyptians got rid of the Roman conquerers. It was because the nymph-queen Cleopatra used sexual tricks to seduce Caesar and get rid of the Romans. The Time Patrol went back to the future and used a similar strategy to defeat the space invaders . . .

"We filmed all of this, but at that time, science fiction was on the downswing in Japan, so the beginning and end sections of the film were cut out, and the negatives destroyed. However, there is a single print in existence somewhere, with the complete beginning and end sequences."

Cleopatra, Queen of Sex was released briefly in the U.S., actually beating Ralph Bakshi's better publicized *Fritz the Cat* as the first X-rated cartoon.

As it happens, Tezuka is a great admirer of Bakshi, and the two directors have a lot in common, particularly in their use of strong violence and sexual scenes in expressing their ideas.

Violent action and a certain amount of light sex are common throughout much of Japanese animation today. In talking about the high technical quality of the TV cartoons, Tezuka spoke about the effect of freedom on technique. "Why is Japanese television animation better than American television animation right now? One of the reasons is that because the American television codes are very strict, and there are so many things that you can't show that it's really hard to experiment or be adventurous in the making of the cartoons. You can't show violence, and you can't show sexual episodes, and you have pressure from various racial groups and women's groups about social content.

"In Japan, there's none of this. The search for new ways to portray violence leads to many new adventures in the technical aspects of how to make comics and animation. For instance, we have boxing cartoons, and you may have a boxing scene where you have to show a lot of violence. But in a Hanna-Barbera cartoon, you're trying to avoid violence as much as possible and make it into a comedy scene. A realistic fight scene is going to require more technical acumen."

"Has any group ever tried to censor your work on TV?" we asked him.

"Some family groups have tried," he smiled. "But no one has succeeded yet."

By contrast, an estimated 14 out of some 40 *Astro-Boy* segments sent to America were returned by NBC as too violent.

In the '70s, Tezuka continued to produce for television, most notably an annual TV movie for Nippon Television. Among the most interesting of these were a sword & sorcery adventure, *Bander Book,* and *Marine Express,* an "Orient Express"-style mystery thriller set aboard a train speeding through a sub-oceanic tunnel between Japan and America.

Marine Express is especially fun due to its casting. As in many of his recent films, Tezuka used his earlier characters to play parts that are often quite different from their original roles. *Tetsuwan-Atom* returns as a young boy, and numerous supporting characters, such as the half-good, half-evil Black-Jack and the doctors from *Astro-Boy,* also reappear in different roles.

Also, in the 1960s and 70s, a

number of cartoonists came into prominence whose work had been strongly influenced by Tezuka's. One of the most important of these is Reiji Matsumoto, the creator of *Space Cruiser Yamoto, Galaxy Express 999* and *Space Pirate Captain Harlock,* all of which have had successful TV runs. *Yamoto* (known as *Star Blazers* here) spawned three successful features, and *Galaxy Express 999*'s movie version attracted so much attention that Roger Corman's New World Pictures picked it up for the United States. Unfortunately, after several ad campaigns and test-bookings around the country, *Galaxy Express* failed to find an audience.

TEZUKA'S TRIUMPH

Without a doubt, Osamu Tezuka's major project in recent years has been the feature film *Phoenix, 2772* (1980), with which he had hoped to break into the world market as a major director.

Phoenix, 2772 is, simply, Tezuka's masterpiece, a major triumph in the world of animation. Budgeted at 800 million yen (about $4 million) *Phoenix* was the most expensive Japanese animated feature to date. If it were made in America, it would have easily cost two or three times that amount.

An epic space fantasy, it grew from an old fairy tale of a boy, accompanied by three animals, who sets out to find a demon. Tezuka fit this into the universe of his philosophical fantasy comic serial, *Hinotori,* which he has described as his "life's work," and set it in the distant future.

"It's a story of kharma and reincarnation," Tezuka says. "There is a body of energy in the cosmos. From the Earth people's point of view, it appears as the legendary Phoenix. When one makes use of the energy in this thing that resembles a bird, one becomes immortal. A space hunter goes out with the objective of bringing this creature back to Earth, and he goes so far into space that he reaches his own limits and does things that one mustn't do . . ."

In *Phoenix,* the hero, Godo, is raised from childhood by a beautiful humanoid robot, Orga, who has the ability to alter her shape into that of a rocket-plane, motorcycle and various other forms of transportation. But as Godo grows to manhood, she discovers she is in love with him, and in an *homage* to *Pinocchio,* wishes she were human.

As Godo enters the space academy, Orga follows him secretly. Godo is branded a rebel because he refuses to fire on the living animals that are slaughtered in a violent training session. His piloting skills are so great, however, that he is offered the mission to find the Phoenix, which scientists believe can rejuvenate the polluted and dying Earth. He refuses.

When he is found with the fiancee of a high official, Godo is sentenced to a hellish prison colony run by Tezuka regular Blackjack. With the aid of an old scientist, Dr. Sarta, another of the regular cast, Godo plots his escape. Finally, as the colony is rocked by quakes, Godo is forced into a boxing match with Blackjack before he can escape in the Space Shark Ship.

Reunited with Orga, and involved in a complex series of sub-plots, Godo, accompanied by Orga and a group of bizarre "comic" aliens, carries out his own search for the Phoenix that ends in a climactic space battle, and, later, the destruction of the dying Earth. Through Godo's willing sacrifice of his life, the Earth is born again.

Phoenix is a powerful film, a tremendous adventure with scenes that are funny and scenes that are very moving. For the most part, the philosophical element remains in proportion to the rest of the film.

Some 700 individual animators are said to have worked on *Phoenix* during the year it was in production, creating sequences that are *tours de force* of animation art.

One scene, which took a single animator an entire year, lasts about 40 seconds. In it, Godo and Orga enter a car. We follow them as they drive away, and the "camera-eye" pulls out

The Phoenix in action. This movie is a cult hit in the United States but never opened officially.

The Amazing Three was syndicated in black white here around 1966. They were aliens in animal form helping fight crime on Earth.

to an overhead shot giving us a sweeping panorama of the futuristic city. Then, still following the car, we move back in to a close shot as Godo reaches his destination and steps out.

The destruction of the prison colony; and Godo's boxing match with Blackjack, a beautifully rotoscoped sequence; and the Shark Ship's fierce battle with the beautiful and terrifying Phoenix are also virtuoso performances. *Phoenix* easily contains some of the best animation of the past 20 years.

Unfortunately, as one distributor put it, "*Phoenix, 2772* is a film without an audience." Which means that it's a difficult film to sell, and in a time when the movie business is in bad shape, distributors do not look for challenges.

In Japan, Tezuka's attempt to fit *Phoenix* to Western tastes back-fired. It bombed badly, getting a reception comparable to that of Steven Spielberg's *1941* in the U.S.

In America, distributors have shied away from *Phoenix*, despite its quality. The film is intended for adults, with its dark and catastrophic vision, extreme violence and sex scenes. It doesn't fit in with what American film sellers think Americans want to see.

If Roger Corman had succeeded with *Galaxy Express 999*, the way would have been open for a film like *Phoenix*. He didn't, and now Toho, the owners of *Phoenix*, are working for a Network TV sale as an "afternoon children's special."

Barring the sale of *Phoenix* to a talented and innovative distributor, the best we can hope for is that the uncut *Phoenix, 2772* will become available on video-cassette. But the few of us who have had the opportunity of seeing Tezuka's epic on the big screen it was intended for treasure the experience.

Since *Phoenix*, Tezuka has remained active in television projects.

Last year, he produced a new series of *Tetsuwan-Atom*, remade in full color with superior animation. Fifty-two new episodes were produced, reportedly drastically rewriting the original scripts in an attempt to create a serial. Tezuka is said to have felt constrained by the demands of Nippon TV and was dissatisfied with the results. The series was only moderately successful with the public.

Tezuka's 1981 TV movie for Nippon TV was *Bremen-4*, a science fiction update of the fable of the animal musicians of Brementown, in which an animal quartet battles a dictator.

In comic books, Tezuka's *Tetsuwan-Atom's* and many of his other volumes were reprinted to coincide with the new TV *Atom*. Tezuka wrote and drew the comics version of *Phoenix 2772*, and continues to do so on all his comics projects, using assistants mostly for adding grays and color.

For Americans in the comics industry, Tezuka's career is one to look at, to see how far a writer-artist with control of the rights to his work can carry his personal vision.

Dr. Osamu Tezuka is indeed the "King of Japanese Comics," and, still in his 50s, one of the great working geniuses of world comic art. As the world of comics and animation of this country opens up to us, we will watch with excitement for his new visions.

The author would like to thank David Owens and Alan Poul of the Japan Society, The Japan Foundation, Fred Patten, my friends Jerry Beck and Will Friedwald, and Dr. Tezuka himself for their help in producing this article.

Readers with further interest in Japanese animation should contact: The Cartoon/Fantasy Organization, 401 South La Brea Avenue, Englewood, California 90301. ■

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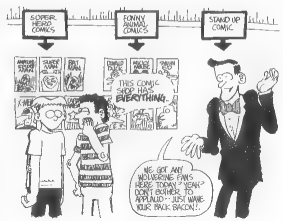
How To Buy Your New Comics

WRITTEN BY BEPPE SABATINI
CARTOONS BY FRED HEMBECK

DO: The best place to buy comics is at a comic book specialty shop. You get to pick out the best copies, get to see what you're buying before you buy it, and you get a good selection of fanzines and special comics that aren't widely distributed. Plus, you get to talk to other fans face-to-face who are interested in the same things as you.


SUPER-HERO COMICS
FUNNY ANIMAL COMICS
STAND UP COMIC
THIS COMIC HAS EVERYTHING!
HE GOT ANY WOLVERINE FANS HERE TODAY? NAH! DON'T BOTHER TO APPLAUD - JUST MAKE YOUR BACK BACON!

DON'T: There are also some really terrible ways to get your new comics, of course—some people still try and stand around in the store and read them, or borrow them from their friends. You'll find out what's wrong with this method when you want to refer to a back issue a year later and all you can do is stand around and scratch your head. A lot of people have come up to me and said, "Gee, I noticed your name in COMICS SCENE. I didn't buy it, I just read your article in the store." So, if you're reading this in the store—cough up!

HELLO MARK?... YOU KNOW THAT COPY OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR WITH DR DOOM THAT YOU LENT ME.." ..YEAH, I REALLY ENJOYED IT, BUT I THINK I WOULD ENJOY IT MORE IF I COULD BORROW AND READ ISSUES 5, 6, 10, 16, 17, 23, 39, 40, 57, 58, 59 . . .
HELLO?
HELLO???
©FRED HEMBECK

DO: If you can't get to a specialty store every two weeks or so, the next best thing is probably a subscription *service*. Most of them carry the specialty-shop-only comics and fan magazines as well as a line of new comics. You should get most of what you ask for, you can change your order whenever you like, and your books should get to you in reasonably good condition. You're sort of buying a pig-in-a-poke, especially when you're trying out a new title or company. And you can't tell ahead of time if you've paid for a fill-in by the editor's brother-in-law or something.

DON'T: Don't confuse this with a *subscription*, though. The difference is that subscriptions come straight from the publisher while a service is run by an independent retailer. With a sub, you have to pay for a whole year's worth in advance (and if you collect 20 comics, that can be a fortune). Issues are often skipped entirely, and the condition varies widely. Sometimes they'll arrive looking beautiful; other times the wrapper will stick to the cover, they'll be stuffed into a tiny mail slot. Anyone who's had a subscription will tell you about the time he saw the new issue of *Avengers* at the store and had to wait three weeks to get a wrinkled copy in the mail.

How To Store Your Comics

DO: All collectors dream of the day when they'll be able to afford a climate-controlled, air-tight, mercury-vapor lit vault to store all their comics in. For most of us—let's face it—it's never going to happen. All you really need to do is store your comics in a *dry, cool, dark* place. Your closet or dresser drawer will do for the first few years; after that you will have to buy or build bookcases and cabinets. After *that*, the things will start to take over whole rooms in your house and you will severely try the patience of your parents or wife.

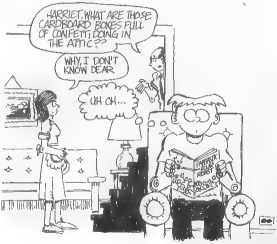
BUT MY ROOM IS TIDY MOM! SEE, I LINED UP AGAINST THAT WALL. I'VE GOT MY AVENGERS, MY ATOMS, MY ACTIONS, MY ADVENTURES, MY AQUAMANS, MY ...

DON'T: Don't, don't, don't keep them in the attic, the basement, or the garage. Your attic will fry them into parchment in a few years. Basements are damp and mildewish, and if you own your comics for 10 years, sooner or later the basement will flood and wash the ink right off the pages. (If you foolishly disregard this and put them in the basement anyway, at least keep them a foot off the floor.) And all three of these places may someday be visited by mice, squirrels or other assorted wildlife. *Sabatini's law:* any rodent chewing up comics to make a nest will pass up coverless Charltons and attack your *X-Men* 99 times out of 100.

YOU--YOU MICE HAVE EATEN MY ENTIRE COLLECTION, EXCEPT YOU HAVEN'T TOUCHED MY WALT DISNEY COMICS. HOW COME?
OUT OF RESPECT, MY BOY, OUT OF RESPECT...

DO: Your biggest decision about storage is whether or not to bag. Plastic bags protect your comics against very slight damage, which would be undetectable in a "fine" comic. So don't bother to bag unless it's in "mint." They might shrink or turn yellow after a few years, so some people replace their bags every 3-5 years. There are bags made of better plastic now for about 50¢ each, which are sturdier, offer more protection, and don't turn yellow. But the flaps are almost impossible to close, and the edges are very sharp and can easily chip or tear a fragile comic.

DON'T: Please don't put your comics into cardboard boxes! Fresh comics in fresh boxes will be okay for a while, but put an old comic in an old box and big pieces may start to flake off in as little as a year. The older your comics get, the faster they deteriorate, and there's no really practical and economical way to deacidify a collection of thousands. (Fifty years from now your comics may be too crumbly to be read.) This includes most of the cardboard boxes sold by dealers as "comic boxes."



Writing and Editing CONAN THE BARBARIAN

By ROBERT GREENBERGER

Perhaps the toughest act to follow in the past several years has been writing the adventures featuring Conan the Barbarian. When Roy Thomas left Marvel almost two years ago, he left behind 10 years of tightly weaved continuity and some 5,000 pages of story.

Choosing replacements meant giving the three titles, the monthly *Conan the Barbarian*, bi-monthly *King Conan* and the monthly magazine *The Savage Sword of Conan*, new life. J.M. DeMatteis inherited the monthly color comic and Michael Fleisher was assigned to the black and white magazine. Thomas left enough material behind so it wasn't until last fall that a writer was needed for *King Conan*, a role that fell to an eagerly-waiting Doug Moench.

Choreographing the moves and keeping a watchful eye over the three titles is Louise Jones. Shortly after joining Marvel, after editing at Warren Publishing, Jones was assigned the three titles and began to sort out her ideas and her writers' thoughts for the character. Even then, plans were afoot in Hollywood to bring Robert E. Howard's barbarian king to the screen. Now that the film has opened, more attention than ever is being placed on the comics and their creators.

We sought out Louise Jones ("Weezie" to just about everyone), Bruce Jones (who is now writing the monthly) and Michael Fleisher to talk about the character and how they approach him in their titles. Premiere Conan artist John Buscema was also approached but he declined the opportunity to speak with the press.

Bruce came to Conan years after discovering his prose adventures. "I stumbled onto the Howard stuff in the early '60s, long before Marvel or anybody else had ideas about making him into a comic character. I remember reading the first story and I thought, 'What a film this would make!' " Jones recalls from his Kansas home.

"So I was very steeped in the whole Conan thing, long before I got into comics." Jones came to New York and

Two pages from Marvel's movie adaptation written by Michael Fleisher, drawn and colored by John Buscema.

ALL ART © 1982 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

Marvel has had their greatest sword and sorcery success with Conan and he has appeared in many formats over the years. He has also been drawn by some of the greatest names in the business ranging from Barry Windsor-Smith to Gil Kane (right). John Buscema (left), Frank Brunner, Gene Colan, Carmine Infantino and Howard Chaykin.

began spending time with new artists such as Berni Wrightson, Jeff Jones and Michael Kaluta. They all started doing comic work for publishers like Warren, Skywald, DC and Marvel. Jones came to the comics from a short story background and was never really assigned the superhero titles, so he did work for Marvel's black and white magazines and kept working at his craft. He hadn't read many comics during his childhood; rather he read the works of Ray Bradbury and Charles Beaumont.

Around 1974, Jones moved back to his native Kansas and concentrated on his writing. He currently scripts *Conan, Ka-Zar,* "I, Vampire" in *House of Mystery* and will do DC's adaptation of the *Swamp Thing* movie .

Jones has high praise for Howard's work. "He was just a great writer. There's only one Robert E. Howard and gee, he's impossible to imitate. He wasn't an excellent writer but there was a crude kind of vigor around him that really was mesmerizing."

Unlike Jones, Louise had read the original Conan tales by Howard but wasn't enthralled with them. She has since gone back to read them again, now that she is responsible for the comic version of the character, and she expresses a preference to the Roy Thomas version. "I wasn't really a fantasy reader or even a sword and sorcery reader," she states in her office at Marvel. "I like the character, I really do."

She says she reads the genre but is not "a fanatic" about it. This is one of the contributing reasons to her establishing the policy of no adaptations in the three comics. "That's because all of the Howard material has been done already and people that are hardcore Conan fans have read them already. They don't need John Buscema to tell them what the world looks like. They've got the pictures in their head. We've gotten real positive response to the new stories," she says with her ever-present smile.

The decision is applauded by both Jones and Fleisher. Fleisher feels his forte is writing his own stories, not rewriting someone else's stories for the magazine. Fleisher comes to Conan after writing some of the most popular and controversial titles in the past 30 years. He remains the current scripter on DC's *Jonah Hex,* a title he has made into his own, and has written a series of *Spectre* stories that fans continue to argue about. After 11 years as a comic writer and with his second novel, *Only Only Love,* at the publishers, Fleisher feels he has reached a nice point in his career.

"Let me say right out that I was not, in the past, a fan of fantasy fiction," Fleisher states from an easy chair in the center of his upper-Manhattan apartment. "When I first received the Conan assignment, I began reading the Howard stories. It's his world that makes the book for me. If I had written a lot of sword and sorcery before this, then I could have said, "I'm going to jump on this and make changes." I had to first reach a point where I was comfortable writing Conan. But it's only recently gotten to the point where I am really getting into the groove of Conan. It's just getting comfortable to write these long stories and getting to the point where I feel more comfort-

CONAN MOVIE PREVIEW

Opposite: Arnold Schwarzenegger as an enraged Conan during the Battle of the Mound. Right: James Earl Jones holds court as Thulsa Doom, leader of the Snake Cult, devoted to Set, the snake god. At his feet is the bewitched Princess Yasmina (Valerie Quennessen) who must be rescued by Conan and company. Below left: Sandahl Bergman as a camouflaged Valeria, Queen of the Thieves. Below right: Conan threatens a man when he begins his search for Doom.

PHOTOS © 1982 EDWARD R. PRESSMAN PRODUCTIONS

ART © 1982 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

Another look at the Gil Kane Conan. Marvel likes to refer to the girl at his feet as Mirieje, who turns up only on the COVER.

able about breaking the rules. If a story doesn't have a monster, that doesn't bother me. And magic. That's something that I really worried about at the beginning, but I've become much more adept at including that. For another person that might be simple but for me it's not simple. For me, the barbaric quality is what I find simple."

WHO IS CONAN?

Louise says, "I find Conan an enigmatic character. There are several ways to approach him. Obviously he has to be more than just a big, strong guy because he has to be bright as well. Real bright. You don't start off as a barbarian and end up the King of Aquilonia if you don't have a good set of brains in your head."

These sentiments were echoed by Bruce Jones, who adds, "Contrary to what a lot of people may think, I see him as a very intelligent person—he just happens to be a barbarian. He's articulate; he is certainly not necessarily given to long diatribes although I don't know if he would be able to if he chose to. I think Weezie and I agree on that basis."

In terms of approach, Louise and Fleisher lean towards the Thomas version of Conan while Jones claims that the Howard version is deeply ingrained. Fleisher refers to a writer's approach to any given character and says, "Anyone who does Conan brings to it certain differences, even if you're not aware of them. For example, I think that my Conan is a pretty rough Conan but I don't think it's the same as Roy Thomas's. In Roy's stories he was more cruel than my Conan. That's not in any way a criticism, that's just an example. I think my Conan stories have a kind of *Mean Streets* quality.

"I think Roy—and none of us has matched this—gave us his evocation of the complexities of Conan's world. Roy really seemed to have a feel for that world; he made you believe that he knew what the soldiers of every different army wore. He had a real feel for the geography. He did that in such a masterful way."

Fleisher pauses a moment and then continues with, "I think that my stories are very visually interesting, they have a lot of visual elements and a fast pace. A really ferocious pace to the story. I think that's been my contribution."

Jones inherited the monthly title from DeMatteis, who gave up the book after only a year because he felt constricted by the heavy continuity Conan requires. Jones had been sharing the scripting on *Savage Sword* with Fleisher, and they traded off issues when Louise offered him the monthly title. "I can certainly appreciate why Mark left," Bruce says. "I've tried to work within the framework but I don't find myself particularly trapped by it. I take Conan off on adventures that are wholly of my creation anyway. As long as I keep him in proximity to where he is supposed to be, I don't have any great problems. I've taken him a little out of Cimmeria, where he is supposed to be in the chronology.

"The funny thing is . . . I'm not blaming Marvel particularly or the fans either, but people have in recent years become so entrenched in the chronology. Howard, who created Conan, wrote the stories in a very scattered way; he was not as nearly concerned with the continuity. I think he may have gathered up the strands towards the end of his life to make something useful for future Conan writers or whatever. In all absolute honesty, one has to ask one's self, if even Howard would have wanted it to go on."

While Jones must contend with following the chronology in Conan's life, Doug Moench is concentrating on Conan's later years in *King Conan*. Only Fleisher has the ability to roam freely and pick the era he wants to write in. Fleisher claims not to have a favorite period to write in; however, he does enjoy the freedom.

Louise's only comment is that she would feel hemmed in if the 10 years preceding her editorial rein was filled with bad continuity, but since Thomas did such a meticulous job, she isn't bothered or concerned.

Both Jones and Fleisher agree that while the sword and sorcery genre dictates the use of sword play, voluptuous women, sorcery and monsters-aplenty, the elements are not mandatory for a good Conan story. The way Louise sees Conan involves a maze. "What you do with a character like this, or any character I suppose, is to set up a maze and run the character through the maze and see which way he goes. The way he goes defines your story more or less. You use those elements to delineate the character." Adds Bruce, "My most successful stories have contained none of those elements."

One interesting observation offered by Jones seems to apply to all three titles. "You end up with two camps. The first camp is made up of diehard Conan addicts. They want Conan just the way their favorite writer happens to write the character, maybe Howard, maybe Thomas, in any case they want that character and they don't want him changed one iota. And they want all the lines to be there and they want the historical accuracy to be absolutely on the mark. The other camp's very concerned with that kind of thing.

"There's another whole camp of feeling saying, 'Boy is that guy boring. All the writer does is stick him in all the same situations. He battles a snake monster, he battles a toad god, he fights with a bunch of pirates, how much of this are we going to see?'

"Now both the camps are justified within their groups. What I try and do is fall somewhere in between. I want the stories to be pure, but at the same time, any character that remains true becomes stagnant. One must remember this: if Bruce Jones, whoever he may be, is hired to write Conan, or any other character, you're going to get Bruce Jones. Otherwise, why choose me to write it?"

Fleisher isn't bothered by the two-camp theory per se. What bothers him is more particular. "Some of the fans think that a character who lived in this brutal dog-eat-dog world that Conan lives in should be continually modified and updated to modern times and attitudes, but they're not Conan's. I think it would be a disservice to Conan to turn him into a 1980 man. I think it's kind of those rough edges that make the character intriguing.

"My own feeling is that the stories

(Continued on page 62)

Jack Katz and The First Kingdom

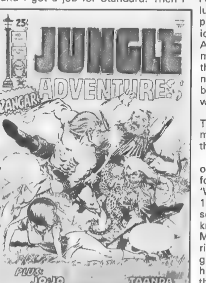
By HOWARD ZIMMERMAN

Jack Katz has been doodling and drawing since he was two years old; he's been at it for most of his life. Katz became a professional artist at the age of 16. He may have been born with a pencil in his hand, but it would have had to last him for a long while. Times were tough for everyone during his childhood years and his family was hit hard by the economic collapse of the Great Depression.

"My family was so poor," Katz says, "that the first time I saw comics was when I was six years old—somebody had wrapped some fish in an old newspaper. On that newspaper with the fish I saw Hal Foster's *Tarzan*. And I remember the page—I have it today—there was this woman and she was using a magnifying glass to start a fire. All of the problems that I had in drawing, he had solved. Perfectly. And he became like my god.

"We moved around continually, to avoid paying rents. But I drew wherever I could; on the floor, on scraps of paper. I looked for *Tarzan* everywhere. Once my father helped me to save up a dime. I was going to buy a *Big Little Book*, with *Tarzan* in it. And I saw this thing on the newsstand and it said, *Flash Gordon*. I said, 'Oh no. That's not *Tarzan*. That's not the same.' Years later I fell in love with Alex Raymond and I realized that *Flash Gordon* was a whole other universe. I don't know," Katz says after a moment's reflection, "maybe it was a blessing that I didn't have comics. I had a wonderful teacher in school who told me that there was not much he could teach me about art, but that if I went to the museums and studied the masters. . . . Which is what I did, and I learned much more from that. I don't think you can 'teach' art. Raymond taught me, Foster taught me . . . but I never knew them."

Katz got his first steady comics work at the age of 19. "I got a job at King Features," he says. "I worked there till I was 23. I walked out at the age of 23 and I got a job for Standard. Then I worked for Fiction House, St. Johns, many of the companies at that time—I did a lot of ghosting.



The cover of *Jungle Adventures* #1, published by Skywald in 1971. "Zangar" was one of Katz' last overground assignments.

"One of the things that's interesting is that I got a job working for Jack Kirby. And he had to fire me," Katz reveals with a laugh. "The reason for that is that I was driving the inkers crazy! I kept putting in tons of wrinkles and designing continually. I fell in love with an illustrator named Dean Cornwell, and I was trying to bring my concepts into comic books . . . For example, I thought that wrinkles were a part of the design, whereas Jack kept saying that 'Wrinkles are tension points!' We were both right.

"Kirby's idea of comics is classic. For what he was doing, he was absolutely right. I was trying to use his place as a vehicle to introduce my ideas. His is an artform within itself. And I now realize what a genius he is, more than ever before. I respected him then, but I think the guy's astounding now. The man's phenomenal! But back then we were in two different worlds.

"But back to working at Kirby's. . . . There was a memorable character; to me the most astounding character in the world. His name was Marvin Stein.

"One day this fellow comes into the office, who looks like he hasn't slept for a year . . . red eyes . . . and he says, 'What time is it?' And Jack said, 'It's 11:00.' I want three covers and two seven-page stories by 6:00.' So, you know, I thought Jack was kidding. So Mort Meskin gives me a shot in the ribs—which was worse than the one I got when I fell off the roof—nods his head at this guy and gives me a 'watch this' look. And Marv starts right in to ink covers—*without pencilling!* So I think he's going bananas. And there he goes: the first cover was a courtroom scene, with all the jurors. The next one is a policeman shooting it out with somebody on a fire escape. And I'm watching this scene and I can't believe what I'm watching. Then he goes about inking—without pencilling first you—the two seven-page stories. Well, he was two pages short by 6:00, so Jack gave him *20 pages to bring in the next day!* I spoke to Lou Fine about this fellow, and he says, 'Oh, Marvin Stein. The guy is absolutely nuts! He could do a page on a shovel!'

"Speaking of Lou Fine," Katz says, "when I spoke to him about graphic novels—even way back than when I

Above left: The cover of *Jungle Tales* (Zanger) #3, pencilled and inked by Katz. This book represents a significant step toward *The Kingdom*—Katz hadn't inked his own work for more than 15 years before this book was published. Above right: Page 8 from *Zangar* #3. Here we see an early flowering of *The Kingdom*, in terms of both style and content. The full-page illustration, the detailed crowd scene, men preparing for war, the flowing stylization of the human form—and the plotting, manipulative priesthood—all are indicative of elements that Katz would expand upon in *The Kingdom*.

was 16—he said to me that there could never be any way that it could happen. There was just no way for an artist to take individual initiative and do this. And this had nothing to do with the fact that the large companies would lock into your characters, or anything like that. He just didn't think that anybody would be willing to take a chance with an original idea. And I agreed with him.

"But when I came out to the West Coast, many years later, a strange thing had happened. I saw the undergrounds, for the first time. And, my heavens! Here was an alternative way of publishing. Of course, I opened them up and it was an emotional shock," Katz says, referring to the *everything goes* content of the early underground. "But the fact remains that I saw that there was independent publishing going on. And so, while I was doing romance comics for DC and *Zangar* for Sol Brodsky at Skywald and the other stuff I was doing, my attention was being captured by this whole new phenomenon. The potential was there. The opportunity was there. And this was the triggering device that opened the way for me to do *The First Kingdom*. I was fortunate enough to get the thing bought, by Bud Plant. And so far it's been doing pretty well. I am able to complete, so far, a dream."

SPEAKING OF DREAMS

"You know, I didn't come by *The Kingdom* by accident," Katz says. "I had a very strange childhood—it's extremely significant. Many people think that I'm unusual," Katz chuckles. "They may be right. I couldn't speak until I was almost five years old. A number of things happened to me during my period of silence as a child. One of them was that I used to have dreams. These dreams are as vivid to me today as they were when I was young. The most telling point about the dreams is that I never saw myself as a young child, but as a young man of about 18 or 19.

"One of the first dreams that I remember—I know that I was three years old and I was living in Canada. . . . We were walking up a rocky grade, and we had just passed an area where, when we walked, there was this grey material that we were walking on. (I had never seen a beach before, or sand.) And when we put our feet into it, the material gave way and filled with water. I was wearing sandals. Now, I never saw the ocean until I was seven. I had never seen sandals. I was living in Canada—you look out the window and there's snow coming down; the only water I'd ever seen was from a sink.

"So we're walking up this grade. I looked back and I saw where we came from. There was this long beach area. At that time I thought it was just this grey field, with all these marks in it from our footsteps. I was wearing these sandals with stones that shone. Now I know them to be diamonds. I had a cape—it was grey and pink and it had golden embroidery. The fellow next to me had a black cape, with gold or silver . . . he was an older man. I had a red string or something around my arm; it was some kind of ornament, something that dangled. I didn't know what a knapsack was then, but the people appeared to have these bundles on their backs, with beautifully colored cloths and all kinds of paraphernalia.

"But I looked back along this area where the grey and the horizon met, and I could see this white material—of

course, it was foam. You know, the breakers. And then I saw what appeared to be skeletons made out of wood—they were ships. But the significant part of the dream is this: suddenly, the breath was knocked out of all of us, we all fell. And we looked back and these two enormous things rose up from the horizon. They were green, and at the tops of them was that form again. And they rose up so high that they blotted out the sun. And down that whole thing came and fell on us. And of course it was the ocean—it was a tidal wave. It dragged many people back, but I survived.

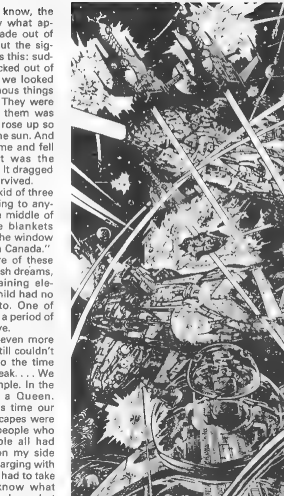
"Now, here I am, a little kid of three years old and I'm not talking to anybody and I wake up in the middle of the night, grab the little blankets around me and I look out the window and it's snowing and I'm in Canada."

Katz relates several more of these vivid, surreal and nightmarish dreams, each one obviously containing elements that the Canadian child had no knowledge of or access to. One of them seems to follow, after a period of years, the one related above.

"Here's another dream, even more significant," Katz says. "I still couldn't speak. It was very close to the time when I finally started to speak. . . . We were going to attack a temple. In the temple was a King and a Queen. Again, I wore a cape. This time our capes were different. Our capes were of a dark rust color. The people who were defending the temple all had blue capes. The people on my side were charging and I was charging with them. And I was terrified. I had to take out my sword—now, I know what Freud would say about this dream but you're going to have to hold back a second, it's not what you think—and the first combatant comes over to me.

"I'm in a sword fight for my life, and he's very good. Somehow or other, I'm skillful enough to kill him, and he falls. Another guy comes at me. Meanwhile, the people are beginning to storm into the temple and I hear screams. I fight with the second fellow and again I manage to emerge victorious. The third fellow is different. He has a red cowling over his face. We were fighting, and as we fought a strange sweat came out of me and came right through the cape. And then I killed him. And when I killed him, he fell and his face fell on my foot. And everyone is running into the temple and urging me to join in, and I hear screams and it's really mayhem in there. I'm torn between the fighting and what's happening here . . . his face is warm on my foot. I take the cowling off his face, and it's my face."

Katz has no way of knowing for sure where these dreams originated, but he has some ideas. "You could say that these are my past lives, or maybe in my genes there are memories. It's possible that I picked up the dreams of somebody else. I had dreams like that until the time I was about seven, but they faded. Why do I remember them so vividly? Well, since I didn't talk to anyone, since there was radio, there was hardly any material to read, I used to think about my dreams all the time. I had my own magic world."



Page 462 from *The First Kingdom*, Book 15. This outer space Armageddon is a flashback, recounting the destruction of a space-faring race. Katz' message: greed, lust for power and its misuse must inevitably lead to destruction.

Katz' whole life turned around after he moved out to the West Coast in 1970. At the time, he was an associate editor at Skywald and was doing freelance work for DC, Marvel and Warren. Then he saw the underground publications and, although he continued to work for the overgrounds a little while longer, more and more of his energy went into writing the *Kingdom*. He finished writing the manuscript in 1973. And then, another significant event: "I met Carolyn after that," Katz says talking about his lovely wife who, among many other things, assists in the production of the *Kingdom*. "She didn't know anything about comics—very straight, Mid-Western girl. She asked me what I wanted to do, and I said I have an idea to do this comic story, this graphic novel. And she says, 'Oh. Well, how long will it be?' I said it will come to 768 pages. She

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says, 'Oh, that'll be about three years' work, won't it?' And I said it'll be 12 years' work." (Katz is producing the 24-book epic at an average of two books a year.) "She was willing to go along with me. The first year I made an incredible $750.00. The royalties have accrued a little better since then. But the fact is that it was a gamble. But then everything is a gamble," he states. "Sometimes it's better to take a chance and fall on your face then to hate yourself for not taking it."

GRAPHIC NOVELS & "THE KINGDOM"

Katz feels that his experiment to create a viable graphic novel is a success, although he believes that many of the other attempts have been failures. "The copyright on the *Kingdom* is 1974, which was when the first one came out. Many people have attempted to do graphic novels since then, but what they have done is simply a glorified comic book. Let me explain that," he says: "The characters in *The First Kingdom* are multi-dimensional. They have well-defined characters, and when they go against how they should behave, it's most surprising. They have with them their development since childhood, and they behave accordingly. In the average graphic novel that has come out since, the characters are as simply formed as most of the comic books from which the energy for what they're doing has come. I think one of the reasons they didn't get picked up by the adult audience was that they were basically comic books with more sophisticated color. The character development was as simple as that which is offered to children in the comic books. The simple plots were better in the films today, and certainly on television, but if you want to seduce people away from the box, you have to give them something substantive, something they can sink their teeth into. My characters are concerned with the deep, meaningful realities of life: the search for their own humanity, the search for their own self-worth; speculation about the nature of existence. This is all part of them.

"I don't have all the tools at my command that a filmmaker does," Katz continues. "My problem is to freeze the super-quintessence of every crucial moment of action, from one frame to the next, and have a continuity. My storytelling is a little different in this sense: I try with the narration to explain what's happening in the drawing.

"I've gotten a few letters from English teachers telling me that my sentences are too convoluted. Well, the fact remains that *The First Kingdom* is a totally different story; it's a totally different element—like finding a six-legged reptile. You don't have to accept it as it is, but you've at least acknowledge its existence. What I am doing is creating a sentence structure that will fit as an organic whole with the nature of the kind of artwork that I'm doing. Since *The First Kingdom* is alien, in every sense of the word, I had to create a sentence structure that would not work outside of the *Kingdom*. Classical construction does not work with the *Kingdom*. Let me give you an example from classical music. Supposed opera had not yet been written. Here I am writing an opera—words and music—it's never been done before. It's simply broadening the horizons of the field, the comic field, so that the next generation will have a greater source well to tap from. It's building, it's constructing."

Katz feels that the comics industry has a lot of room to grow, especially in the direction of creative approaches to the inherent challenges of the comics format.

"When you solve a problem in drawing," Katz explains, "it's much like writing—you solve it from a unique perspective. And by so doing your style, your craft, is easily seen. In the beginning of the comics industry everybody had to have a unique style. But then later, the comics fell into disarray and we were fortunate enough to have Jack Kirby to start animating the field with the energy of his brush and pen. Jack saved this industry. It was on his back that it's survival depended.

"But because Jack was so successful at this, they thought *there must be a winning style.* So they asked all the new artists to subordinate their styles and their own individuality to Jack's style. Well, it's wonderful for Jack; he's an original creative artist. But if you're taking another kid, and he's original and creative and he subordinates his style, what that does is eat away at the potential to broaden the field.

"The field has to be like a large river, with many confluences. Many different energies feeding an ocean. Otherwise it becomes like a stagnant pool, to eventually rot away. One of the problems is that they became orthodox in their thinking. Not only have no new characters been created since Jack and Jerry Siegel—although I'll get big arguments about that—but new ideas and new ways of handling the books have not been introduced.

"The opportunity is there. It's simple. What they have to do is trust in the invention of the new creative artists who are coming along. And there are many of them. A lot of them have been turned off and a lot of them have de-

(Continued on page 64)

The Gene Colan Interview

Part One: Creating His Own Destiny

By DON McGREGOR

"I remember buying Superman *and* Batman *comics. When I was about 10 I read* Popeye *and* Famous Funnies *and the* Katzenjammer Kids *had its own comic book.* Terry and the Pirates *was my big thing. I was weaned on* Terry and the Pirates. *And what attracted me to it was the dramatic presentation Caniff brought to everything he did."*
—Gene Colan.

Gene Colan was born in 1926, and spent the first six years of his life on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx. The '20s were a civilized time in the Grand Concourse's life, when the streets were still tree-lined, and Colan roamed about that neighborhood, a sensitive city kid with a passion for comics.

By the 1980s Gene Colan would be one of the foremost artists in the comic book medium, and he would have rendered nearly all of the comics' classic characters, from Batman to Superman, Daredevil to Captain America, Wonder Woman to Hopalong Cassidy. If a character is a part of either the Marvel or DC universe, it is quite likely that Gene Colan has interpreted him visually at one time or another. Colan is not a cartoonist—he is one of the few illustrators in the field, a naturalist whose style is unique.

Since the first time I worked with Gene Colan in 1974, on a *Killraven* story for Marvel Comics, I have wondered why Gene's work hasn't influenced more of the newer artists coming into the business, say, in the manner that Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Jim Steranko and Neal Adams have. Colan was an essential part of the 1960s renaissance of comics, working, as did Kirby and Ditko, from sketchy plots by Stan Lee, to fashion their own styles of telling a story; concentrating on the mood, the tone and pacing of those stories that suited them best. I think that over the years I have come to a conclusion as to why there aren't more imitators of Colan's approach: his style is subtler than many of the others. There isn't a definitive line to copy from Gene's work, relying as it does on shading. His pencil work displays this most clearly; it is as if he paints with the pencil rather than draws. The faces on his people are real, with real expressions, not just the tried and true melodramatic renditions of anger or fear or joy most often associated with comics. There are complex emotions on those faces that bring out the complexity of the characters he illustrates, even when the script hasn't given them any depth.

Gene reminds me, in some ways, of that character he drew in the 1950s for DC comics: *Hopalong Cassidy.* He has the same distinctive white hair that William Boyd did, and the quiet determination to carry on his affairs in his own manner.

We discussed his life and career in the comfort of his beautiful home, Adrienne Colan, dark haired and vivacious, prompts Gene during our discussion, reminds him of anecdotes and expresses a concern for the value of her husband's art. In some ways, she realizes its worth and importance more than Gene.

When Gene was about seven years old, his parents moved to Long Island for a year. This was the country as far as the young Colan was concerned, and he always missed it when they moved back to Manhattan a year later.

He already loved the comics, especially the newspaper strips.

"There was a strip at the time called *Dickie Dare* that I followed. There was a newspaper in New York at the time called *The Sun,* and my father bought only *The Sun.* And I would follow

PHOTO: DEBORAH UPTON

Dickie Dare and his dog Wags day by day. I lived on every incident that happened," he says, with quiet passion, as if very close to that little boy of the '30s. "I would meet my father with such anticipation and anxiety at the subway. I couldn't wait for him to come up out of the subway so I could grab the paper out of his hand (he'd always have it tucked under his arm) and right out there on the street, I'd open the paper to the comics page to see what happened to Dickie Dare."

Colan's love for comics came early, as did his love for art.

"Norman Rockwell was my favorite. I'd draw everything he would come up with for *The Saturday Evening Post*. I would copy it line for line. I was about 10, 11, something like that, and I would draw anything that caught my eye. I remember a Coca-Cola sign with a very pretty girl. She had a big broad-brimmed hat. She was so beautiful, and so beautifully done by one of the famous illustrators of the day." His voice remains soft, but the romance and desire of the 10 year old, looking up at that beautiful woman in the broad brimmed hat, touches his words. "I couldn't find that illustration in any magazines. It just wasn't in them! It was only on the billboard. So I took myself down to Columbus Circle, where this billboard was. Fortunately, at that spot, there was a little park where you could sit down on a bench, and facing the bench was this billboard. I sat there on a sunny day with pad and pencil, and I just looked up, and I copied it. It was the only way I could get it," he finishes. The memory is bittersweet, as that of a first love.

Colan has a hatred of institutions that ranges all the way back to the days of his early schooling in New York City. There is a good chance that part of his love for comics comes from this antipathy—the comics have seldom symbolized institutions, just as institutions have seldom recognized the comics.

"My approach to my life has been to do what I like to do. And what I didn't like to do I didn't do. It's as simple as that," he says, smiling. "Nothing could change it. Threats, punishment, it didn't matter. If I didn't like school, I just couldn't adapt to it. People would say, 'You know when you get older and become an adult, you're going to wish you were back in school.' In my dreams, I dream I do go back to school and it's a bloody nightmare," he laughs. "There's a smell to institutions, and it reminds me of strictness . . . or restriction . . . almost like living in a police state. And there's a smell to the rooms and the hallways that means trouble, and I don't like it for those reasons." He laughs again, but even now, this many years removed from the hallways and rooms of those schools, he hasn't mellowed in his feelings toward them.

His mother was the prime advocate of art school, when she realized her son's unbridled love for illustration. During one summer she sent him to an art school, but he wasn't much more enthusiastic about those halls of academe than he was of the regular school system.

"I finally went to the Art Student's League, and the teacher I had there was a very famous Japanese Modernist, and his interpretations of paintings were from a Modern standpoint, and I'm not a Modern artist." There is less passion when he discusses these statistics. They are merely facts. "I never gained anything out of that, but when I was in my early teens I went to DC looking for work. I had a comic strip of my own. This was during the war years, and since I couldn't go to war, and since, to a very young man, war was a very romantic thing, like cowboys and Indians, I would live it through the character I created. I would send him into the battlefields, and I would send him to the foreign countries."

Colan took his intrepid hero into DC's art offices and saw real comic art for the first time. He had drawn his pages the size he saw them in the comic book, never realizing that, in ac-

tuality, comic art is reduced greatly from its original size.

"The art director came out and looked at my work, and he did the typical thing. He encouraged me. He said, 'You have promise,' and he brought me in and introduced me to all the artists. Bob Kane (the creator of Batman) was on staff at that time." Gene shakes his head. "I couldn't believe what I saw." He is still soft-spoken, as he most always is, but there is a proper reflection of awe in those soft tones. "I didn't meet Kirby, but I saw his original art, and I couldn't believe how far afield I was in every respect. 'I have to come up to *this* level!' I thought. 'I don't know if I could ever do it!' This was my first experience with original artwork, and I couldn't believe that human hands had done these pages. It was like a machine did them, not a person, it was too perfect for any human being to draw like that. It had to be done in some other photographic, mysterious way."

They told him he would have to go to school if he wanted to be an artist, and despite his dread of such places, he realized the validity of the statement.

About that time, inspired by movies about the war, he tried to enlist in the Marines. He might have made it if his father hadn't come down and convinced them that Colan was underage. A year later he enlisted in the Air Force, and was soon shipped to Manila.

"It was glamorous to be shot, and besides you didn't feel it anyway," he recalls of the movies of that time, like *Wake Island* and others. "You watched it on the screen and everybody just fell down. There was no blood to talk of. Nothing to frighten the life out of you." He laughs now at the Hollywood absurdities. He wound up in Special Services as a Prison Chaser. The world of comics seemed very distant, even though, just before his enlistment, he had managed to sell some of his first artwork to a small comics company called Fiction House.

"A prison chaser is a man who sits with a carbine and watches the prisoners, making sure they don't take off. You are responsible for them. If they get away, you serve their time." This is a thought to make anyone shudder. "The prisoners are in a stockade but they also have to go out on garbage runs. You have to go around with them to make sure they don't take off." He speaks with more strength. "I wanted to be an artist, that's why I wanted to get into Special Services. I made a bloody pest out of myself to get my MOS changed, but it didn't cut any ice. I'm a prison chaser. That's a helluva fine how do you do. But one day there was a questionnaire, and they wanted to know what you would do if a prisoner escaped. And everybody had an answer," Gene had an answer for them, too. "When they came to me, I said, 'I'd let them go.' I was out that afternoon."

The bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, and the war was over. Gene had been assigned to train as a gunner in a bomber, one of those guys that sit in a plastic bubble, in the underbelly of an airplane; but now that the war was ended, the Air Force schools were closed down.

In Manila, he worked for a newspaper called the *Manila Times*. Since he already had some professionally published work from Fiction House in comics he used some of that work when he applied for the *Manila Times* work.

But comics and the movies were still his true loves.

"Comics were like movies, and since I was such a tremendous movie-goer, and since I didn't think I could ever be a director or an actor or be a photographer, although I wanted to be all those things, I focused on the comics. I did want to be associated with Hollywood. I even wrote to Disney once, but didn't get anywhere. I figured comics were the next best thing. And this was something I *could* do. And that's how it started."

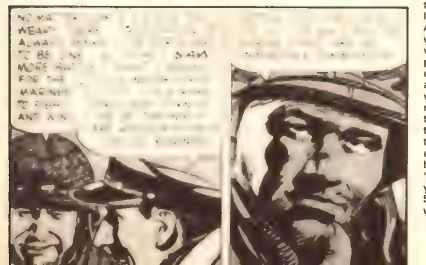
He continues the film analogy. "You cast the characters yourself, you set up the scenes like a photographer would." When he first went to Fiction House he showed them samples of his story-telling, not single illustrations, and he offers that advice to aspiring comic artists. "I would advise any fan

The art on these pages shows Colan's development from the early fifties, left, when he worked for Atlas /Marvel to 1963 and a war story for DC Comics.

THUD THUD...
THE BOYS ARE IN! WHO'S A DOUBLE TOUCH?
THE SCORPION STRIKES!
THE SCORPIO
BLOOOSH
SWOOSH
SOLO! THEY CAN'T OPEN THE SCORPION! RUNNING! TEAR APART THE BLOPS!
BLAM
SPLASH!
SPLASH!
LOCKED IN THE ARMS OF THE SCORPION
BEAT THOSE SHELLS - BEFORE WE'RE POUNDED FLAT LIKE A CARPET!
DITCH! YOU'RE GIVING HIM HEART FAILURE!
WHOOP

YOU'VE GOT TO THINK EARLY. IF I GET STARTED NOW, I'LL BE ALL WORN OUT BY THE TIME I'M 30!
I'M GOING TO BE A GREAT ARTIST!
OH, PAUL? HE'LL BE RIGHT BACK. HE WENT OUT TO FIND SOMETHING. HE SHOULD BE BACK ANY MINUTE NOW! TWO GO ON AND DANCE UNTIL THEY GIVE OUT THE PRIZE!
(HIC!) ...OKAY, JOAN OF ARC... SEE YA LATER!
YOU GET RID OF THEM ALL, SUNNY BOY, YOU COULD CAN YOU KEEP IT UP? WHAT'S THAT, EC
MAYBE HE HAS SUN OUT ON ME! MAYBE HE DOESN'T LOVE ME
I KNEW I SHOULDN'T HAVE SO LONG
ARE YOU?
MMMPH!

When Colan's style was young he had a sense for design and facial expressions.



who wants to get into comics to show the publishers continuity drawing. Most fans at conventions show you a picture that they have drawn. Or a situation. But never telling a story. And that's a big mistake. Companies want to see if you can tell a story. And that's how I got started."

Colan drew cartoons for the *Manila Times* on a freelance basis, somewhat reminiscent of the Army life sketches that the famous cartoonist Bill Mauldin did at that time. He has no examples of that early work. Somewhere in Manila perhaps, there exist a few yellowing copies of those newspapers with Gene's illustrations; beyond that, they are lost.

Adrienne Colan says that Gene has seldom saved any of his work. For a long time, of course, the comic companies did not return art to the artists. They either stored the pages in warehouses or (get ready for this) they destroyed it, burned the original art!

Yet, despite all of the effort Gene puts into his work, Adrienne says he often fails to recognize its value, and she tells a story that defines that statement.

"When we first met, Gene had a sketchbook of things he would see in Bryant Park by the library. Beautiful pencils," she says, with obvious high regard for the work. "This was in the '50s, and when we moved out into the country, or at least Gene thought the suburbs were the country, he got a gun. He wanted something to plink away at. He thought this sketchbook would be a really great target. And it indicates his own lack of value on his work. We now have a holy sketchbook, and not in a religious sense."

In Manila, Gene met Steven Kidd. Gene had entered an art contest, which he won. Kidd challenged him.

"He said, 'Can you draw an ear?' And I said, 'Can you?' And he said, 'Of course I can, and not only can I, but I can name all the parts of the ear. That's something you should know.' I was a little resentful, because I didn't trust him, and I said, 'Prove it.' " Gene laughs. "I had a lot of gall. But he did. And I could see he was being truthful with me. He sort of took me under his wing. He said, 'Never do anything in a perfunctory manner. Give it a lot of care. After all, if you are going to draw a tree,' and I remember these were his words, 'you don't draw a tree in five minutes. It took God a hundred years to make a tree.' So he would draw a tree with real care. He put a lot of detail into it. If he drew a G.I. boot, you could see every lace-hole, and every bit of the character of the leather. 'These are all details,' he told me, 'that you must as an artist pay attention to.' So I learned a lot from him, and that was a good experience overseas."

Gene's work began to reflect Kidd's tutoring.

When he returned from Manila, and his tour with the service finished, he tried to get work from the only comics company he knew, Fiction House. But they weren't buying material at the time.

He went up to another comics company: Timely Comics. Timely would eventually become Marvel Comics.

"I came up around lunch hour, and the art director at that time was a man by the name of Al Sulman. I was just up there to show him my work. I had been working very carefully on a war story that I had inked and lettered myself. There was maybe six or seven pages. And maybe 10 panels on a page. He saw a lot of promise in it, and he said, 'Wait here,' and he took my work in to show Stan Lee. Within minutes, Stan had asked me to come in.

"He sat me down and he said, 'Sit down!' " Gene gives the voice a mock-tough New York City edge. "Now what Stan had on his head was a beany cap with a propellor on the top. Have you ever seen anything like that?" He shakes his head, amused, remembering. " 'So you want a job, hey?' he says." He makes his own voice meek, self-effacing. "I said, 'Yes, I do.' He said, 'Do you think you're good enough?' " He makes his reply tougher now. "I said, 'I know I am,' because I knew that was the only way to talk. If you don't think you are, they won't think you are." He puts a movie boss' sneer into his voice. " 'Okay,' he says. He's just clowning around with me. 'How much you want a week?' " Gene shrugs. "I didn't know what to say. I think I left it up to them. So he told me what the rate was and he said, 'You start Monday.' And that was it."

He met Syd Shores during those early days at Marvel, an artist who helped him during those initial, under-fire days of turning out comics. He feels that Shores, who passed away several years ago, has been overlooked by much of the comics industry and was a fine artist in his own right. Like Steven Kidd, Gene credits Shores with being one of the major influences on his work.

"We all sat in a big room called the Bullpen. Syd overlooked everyone because he was the oldest member, the one with the most experience. We were all kids at the time. Within a week, John Buscema came along and he became a part of the team."

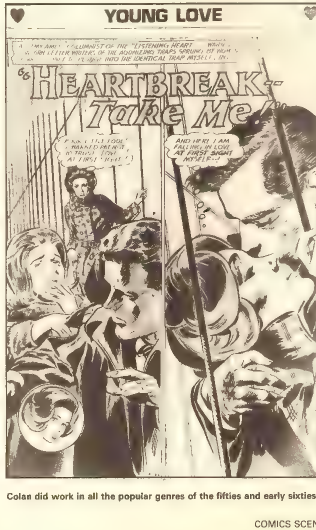
Gene's work is very illustrative, and the care and detail that he learned from Steven Kidd had taken root in his heart and brain and became a part of his talent. Since such detail was dissimilar from the majority of the art styles in comics, he sometimes had to curtail that impulse to draw everything he felt germane to a scene, to a certain place.

"They wanted me to break it down to simpler terms," he admits, without rancor, "which is something I was never able to do, or cared to do. I just didn't want to do it. Almost every artist and writer, invariably, falls in line with what he or she thinks should be done. I would bend a little in one direction. 'After all,' Stan would say, 'you're appealing to eight year olds in many cases, youngsters who don't understand what you're driving at. You should try to make it a little bit clearer, not so sophisticated. We're not selling comics to the adults. Or college people. We're selling them to children. And if you can't make it simple enough so that they know—even without the words—what's happening, then you haven't told the story properly.' "

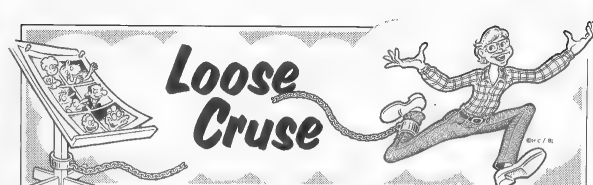
There was never an edict that Gene must mend his ways, or definitely change his approach. He worked for St. John Publications and Quality Comics, drawing *Blackhawk*. He also drew many war stories for Marvel and contributed some romance tales. In the 1950s he went to DC comics and began drawing *Hopalong Cassidy*.

It seemed he had arrived, but comics are a risky business at best, and security can often be an elusive quicksilver substance. For the moment he was illustrating the adventures of one of the most popular characters of the '50s, but the McCarthy era was fast approaching, and the condemnation of comics was just around the corner. It was a time when no one could be sure there would be any comics left to draw or write, a time when perhaps even a self-imposed comics code might not be able to save an industry.

Next Issue: Gene Colan discusses survival during the comics' darkest hour, the first time he'd ever seen a corpse, the renaissance at Marvel, his work during the '70s, and even the future.■



Colan did work in all the popular genres of the fifties and early sixties.



Not Being There Yet

Thursday morning. If I push myself and forego jogging, I can finish the *American Photographer* art and deliver it on my way to *Export*, thus consolidating my time logged on the subway.

Then, by wrapping up the *Export* assignment over the weekend, I can clear the decks for those health food sketches I promised I'd have by the end of next week.

I've had an idea for an interesting strip for *Eclipse* for what must be eight months by now. I really thought I'd made room for it in April, but then the health food guy called, and by the time I get his job out of my hands, *Bananas* is bound to have a new "Doctor Duck" script ready . . .

Hey, I'm getting work! I'm grateful! Don't get me wrong.

But there's this feeling I have as once more I put aside that strip I've been wanting to get to. *I'm not There yet.* That's what I feel about myself.

Where is *There?*

Hard to say exactly, but I know when I'm in the vicinity. I can smell its nearness the way I smell fresh crescent rolls from outside a bakery.

I'd like to stroll into that bakery, have them smile across the counter, grab my hand and say, "Why, Mr. Cruse, merely to look at you is to recognize your sterling qualities. Please allow us to provide you with our delicious crescent rolls free of charge. Indeed, let us guarantee you all the free crescent rolls you may desire for the rest of your life!"

Ah, if only appetites were so simply satisfied!

Daydreams aside, the fact is that it takes money to buy rolls, or to secure living space, or to nourish yourself so that you have energy for drawing while occupying that space. Gaining access to the requisite money usually involves an extended campaign. The urge for artistic fulfillment, unless it's nimble and prepared to stick up for itself, can easily get trampled underfoot once the harsh battle for basic survival is engaged.

Once in a happy while, a young cartoonist will encounter a cartoon buyer who is prepared to offer a living wage in return for precisely the drawings that the cartoonist prefers to draw. But by all reports, that's rare! Most of us who want to be professionals rather than hobbyists have to do a lot of bending in the early years in order to keep afloat. When we manage to harvest a little creative satisfaction in the course of our contortions, it's a special pleasure.

Thinking of this, I'm reminded of a particular day in 1969. I was in New York. I was delivering my last job for Flaghouse, Inc. Tom Borowik, the man who had hired me for sporatic freelance gigs even though I was just out of college and very green around the edges, listened as I said my piece.

"I don't expect I'll have time to do Flaghouse jobs for awhile," I told him. "I've decided to try concentrating on 'underground' cartooning."

Tom nodded thoughtfully. "I don't know how much money there is in underground stuff," he ventured.

"I still want to give it a try," I said.

In those days I was always quitting jobs. I once gave notice at the end of July because I couldn't bear to spend August indoors while Central Park beckoned. I had an almost mystical faith in my bank account's ability to spontaneously regenerate. Still, I wanted Tom to understand where my head was at. He had done me the favor of behaving as though I had a promising future as an artist at a time when my own confidence in that prospect needed all the bolstering it could get. I felt he deserved an explanation.

I had connected with Flaghouse the previous winter through a classified ad in the *Village Voice*. Flaghouse was seeking freelance cartoonists, and that's what I wanted to be. I was employed at the time by a small typesetting firm which specialized in working 18 hour days producing legal documents for corporate mergers which, judging by the hysteria surrounding our hairbreadth pre-dawn deadlines, must have customarily been consummated around 4:00 a.m. My role was to hunch over a light table and slice minute corrections into complex charts composed of very tiny type. I was nearing my burnout threshold when I spotted the Flaghouse ad.

Today Flaghouse distributes athletic equipment and camping supplies. But its initial enterprise was providing pennants and custom-made flags to high schools across the country; hence its name. By the time I encountered Flaghouse it was already diversifying its catalog; today, in fact, it carries no flags at all. But in 1969 the banner business still looked bullish at the House of Flags, and here came I with my portfolio composed of a mishmash of posters I'd drawn for college plays, logos for Alabama Volkswagen dealers, comic strips already rejected by every syndicate in the country, etc. Never was a youngster's flag-designing potential so clearly in evidence.

Let me acquaint you with the flag-production process, so you'll see how I fitted in. A direct-mail brochure from Flaghouse would catch the eye of the Principal (or Student Council or PTA) of, say, Scrubbutter High School in Montana. Flaghouse's hook was to deliver, upon request, a free flag design based on the school's colors (green and gold) and the symbol or mascot of the school's athletic team

(the Scrubbutter Flaming Otters). No strings attached. If the design proved pleasing, Flaghouse was prepared to translate it into an actual banner at a reasonable price. "Sounds good," the Principal (or whoever) would say, and the handy coupon would be mailed forthwith.

Every few days I would stop by the Flaghouse office and pick up a few dozen such orders, along with standard illustration boards on which blank flag forms were printed. "The Scrubbutter Flaming Otters!" I would murmur to myself. "Let's give those kids at Scrubbutter High something to cheer about!" Across a rich green field would go heroic golden letters announcing the name of the team. In the center, a snarling otter would be rendered, frozen at a dramatic stage of combustion. How many of my designs were accepted, I wonder? How many were sewn into noble banners, perhaps flying aloft to this day? Let *others* be hung in elitist galleries. I was being hoisted up flagpoles all over America!

As I recall, I was paid seven dollars a shot for these designs.

Emboldened by my freelancing coup, I quit my job at the type shop. I set up a stiff regimen for myself. Rising at 7 a.m., I would plunge into the day's quota of lions, tigers and bears. At first I worked in tempera, striving for maximum originality and flash with each design. Then the arithmetic of the situation began to sink in. At seven dollars per design and with Manhattan rent to be paid, I had to turn out a *lot* of flags. And *fast!*

So I streamlined. I switched to Magic Markers. I worked up drawings of the more popular animals and traced them over and over again. I worked till 11:00 at night, hit the sack, then rose with the morning traffic to go at it again. I felt intrepid. I felt disciplined. I felt stupid.

I soon learned an unfortunate fact about freelancing: sometimes you're in demand and sometimes you're not. I'm not sure how many flag-hungry schools I thought there were cut there on the coupon circuit, but demand for my services dropped off once I had worked through Flaghouse's backlog of orders. (Or perhaps a more adept flag-renderer was siphoning off my assignments.) After a few weeks Tom thanked me and said he'd give a call the next time my talents were required.

Unemployed! Suddenly I remembered the appeal of regular salaries.

Flaghouse as I'd abandon me entirely. Indeed, as I'd said earlier, in the long run it was I who did the abandoning. But I turned out occasional jobs for Flaghouse in the few months before my final defection. Decals, certificates for Best Camper of the Summer, things like that. And scattered jobs from other sources came my way. Still, I wasn't really making it. I was surviving, yes, and sometimes when I was working I'd sense a glimmer of nascent professional pride. But something more had to lie beyond all of this, and I knew I wasn't There yet.

The germ of a breakthrough dates from that rocky time. My cartooning efforts had previously been pretty traditional. Jokes were arranged Just So in the customary number of panels. But there were other drawings as well that I had been doing through the years. These were squeezed into margins of textbooks and compressed within the random empty spaces left among notes from boring college classes. These were doodles, not important because they were not for publication.

'Yet the mystery I pondered then, I still ponder now. What could I do with my creativity if...?'

In these scribblings, my subconscious imagery spilled without censorship onto paper. The drawings were disturbing in their idle perversity. Cows gave arduous birth to elephants. Spikes were pounded beneath the nails of swollen fingers, or between teeth and bleeding gums. The necks of hapless clowns were wrung by robots. These were throwaway items rendered in pencil or ballpoint and long ago discarded. Friends who peered at these images as I drew them usually eyed me warily afterwards, but still seemed eager to see what I would come up with next. In their awful way, these drawings were definite crowd-pleasers.

I remembered my doodles during the summer of '69, and wondered if they would still evoke fascination if rendered in a more crafted style. Thus was born a series of drawings which I collectively named *Phenomena.*

Isolated as I was from the work of artists around me, I thought I was exploring uncharted territory. Actually, I was experiencing my personal version of a creative ferment happening everywhere. These were times when all boundaries were being radically questioned. Actors were vaulting conventionally out of their safe proscenia. Pop artists hoisted comic book panels and soup cans into galleries. Psychedelic rock posters upended most traditional rules of graphics. Underground comic books were happening, but I hadn't seen them yet, though the strips offered in underground newspapers provided a fragmentary glimpse of worlds to come. The upshot was that I stopped assuming that comics existed only for laughs or storytelling. I saw possibilities for communication on deeper psychological and even mystical levels. Much that has been of value to me springs from that insight. *Phenomena* was the crude initial result.

I haven't seen those old *Phenomena* drawings in years. The only one I still remember depicted a monkey perched upon a giant human hand, peeling the most prominent finger like a monumental banana. Freud wouldn't find the symbolism of *that* one overly opaque. I modestly thought that the whole *Phenomena* series was weird, groovy, trippy and keen! I decided that it should be a regular feature in the *East Village Other.*

The *Other,* nicknamed *EVO,* was the radical "hippie" journal of the period. I was digging rock-and-roll and getting stoned and leading a marginal enough existence to feel fairly hippie-ish. The smattering of comix that had caught my attention within its pages and the pages of its spinoff *Gothic Blimp Works* made me think that *EVO* might get off on my odd visual fantasies. So I trekked from my one-room apartment in Chelsea into the wilds of the East Village.

The lyric dream of Flower Power had taken on fuzztone distortions along the streets where I walked. Smiles had too much amperage. Shaggy pilgrims seemed relegated to a destinationless saunter past the youthful panhandlers with dilated pupils who jockeyed for handouts. Or maybe everybody was out shopping for eggs and butter, and my own mind was building alienated images out of its own discomfort. I was a tourist there, not a native. Long-of-hair certainly; perhaps even cosmic-of-vision. But a Street Person? No.

I ascended a narrow stairwell and entered the *EVO* office. Mounds of paper were strewn across all available flat surfaces. Several workers glanced up at me as I stood awkwardly in the doorway. I felt more transparently unhip by the moment. After all, this was hardcore counterculture here. Even the T-Squares had beards. I managed to announce that I had some cartoons to show. One fellow whose name I don't remember took me aside

(Continued on page 52)

Mr Cruse has been given a free hand to express his thoughts and ideas in any manner he wishes within the scope of this publication. This column does not necessarily represent the editorial views of COMICS SCENE nor our philosophy. The contents is © 1982 by Howard Cruse.

Doing *Prince Valiant* Right

By ROBERT GREENBERGER

Back in 1936, a young artist named Hal Foster decided to do a historical comic strip of his own design. At the time, he had been writing and drawing Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan* for the comic pages of daily and Sunday newspapers. Foster passed the *Tarzan* reins to another artist and set about to create a world that would be familiar to the readers but at the same time unique. In February 1937, *Prince Valiant* made his first appearance in the Sunday comic pages—and he hasn't left yet.

In the very first tale, Val was only seen in one panel and for the first story he was a boy of maybe five. His father had just lost the throne in Thule and they set about looking for a place they could call home. The exiled family found their home in Britain, just before the rule of King Arthur. It was a time of knights and maidens, magic and dragons.

Val grew to early manhood and set about to find Camelot. Along the way, he had many short adventures that moved quickly, Sunday to Sunday. Once he reached the land of the Round Table, however, the stories became longer without losing any of their speed.

Since then, artists and writers have looked to Foster's intricately designed pages for inspiration. Readers loved the strip and couldn't wait until the following Sunday. For Louisiana-born fan Rick Norwood, the enjoyment led to his collecting every *Prince Valiant* page, and now he is beginning to share his collection with other devotees. Coming later this year, around September 1, Norwood's Manuscript Press will be publishing *Prince Valiant—An American Epic.*

Norwood, 39, told us that his life has been filled with many, "probably too many passions, including mathematics, comic books, science fiction and my family."

While studying mathematics at MIT, Norwood discovered the joys of the Silver Age of comics and, with his friends, wrote fan letters to Silver Age architect Julie Schwartz. (Norwood notes that as far as his group was concerned, nothing could beat Joe Kubert's early Hawkman revival stories.)

Now a visiting professor at Lehigh in New Jersey, Norwood has spent the last year working to put together the first year of *Valiant's* adventures in a large, 16" x 22" format with careful hand separations and handstitching. It's Manuscript Press's third book but the first to venture into the graphic story field.

Norwood's first two books came about by chance. "I was covering the launch of Apollo 11 for the hometown newspaper," he says, "and I was at a party and Hal Clement, one of my favorite science fiction authors, was there. We were talking and he said, 'You know, I've got a manuscript for a novel that has never been published.' I said, 'I'll publish it,' even though I had no idea of how to publish a book. I had a friend who had a printing press in his basement and another friend who could do some typesetting and pretty soon we published the book."

Actually it was not "pretty soon" since Norwood comments that "it takes a lot more time and more money to publish a book than most people think." Just after Clement's *Left of Africa* was published (only 700 copies were printed, several remain unsold), Norwood received a manuscript from R.A. Lafferty. "He wrote, 'Here's a manuscript that's better than anything else you've seen cross your desk in a long time.' I read it and I agreed with him and it's a magnificent novel." Lafferty's *Archipelligo* received many favorable reviews but again, without a major distribution set-up, the book was hard to find. Yet, both books turned small profits for Norwood.

Between *Archipelligo*'s publication in 1975 and today, Norwood devoted his time to mathematics and a family. The father of five received his Ph.D. in mathematics and went on to teach while still collecting the *Valiant* and *Steve Canyon* strips.

Norwood finally finished the *Valiant* set by buying out another almost complete set and once the gaps were filled, he decided it was time to publish the complete works for posterity. Noting that the other attempts to print *Valiant* stories have met with less-than-spectacular results, he was determined to do this book right. He struck up a friendship with Russ Cochran, the man responsible for the reprinting of the old EC comics, and the two are overseeing the book. It will contain the 46 Sunday strips done in 1937 and will have six pages of introductory material by Norwood, illustrating the introduction will be never-before-seen art from personal Christmas cards that Foster did over the years.

Norwood envisions printing volume after volume on a regular basis but hinges each volume on the preceding one. He and Cochran decided that a print run of 1500 copies of the first volume will sell out quickly enough so that work can begin on the second. With luck, Norwood hopes, the volumes will come out faster than one a year. "I guess I'll run out of material in the year 2010. So if I last that long, *Prince Valiant* will be coming out as long as people want it to."

Another element Norwood must count on is the color separations. They are being handled by Chemical Color, the same people who do the color separations for the comic books. Ed Whitbread, a veteran in the business, is overseeing the job which will cost Norwood $300 per page, compared to the $70 per page the major comic publishers pay.

One of Norwood's joys in doing the book has been meeting fan after fan, all of whom have been incredibly helpful; each person suggesting others that might help Norwood. This led to his finding the original art to the first *Prince Valiant* page, tucked away at Syracuse University. Foster turned over his collection of Sunday pages and press proofs to George Lawrence Research Library. Interestingly enough, their collection was incomplete but in a warehouse, filed away in drawers, were page after page of original art. The bottom half of the first page was held in one place and it took the director of the collection and Norwood one cold, snowy afternoon to find the top half. The reason, he says, that the top half was never found was that it was never identified by date or by any other markings. To help insure quality, the original art from that page is being shot for the book.

Norwood finds *Valiant* appealing because "the story is instantly captivating and the adventures are fast, the history is accurate, the dialogue witty; it just grabs you and carries you along with it."

The book's final story does not end, leaving readers and collectors with a cliffhanger until the second volume eventually turns up. A noteworthy comment about the story from Norwood: "One of the longer stories in particular has Prince Valiant disguise himself as an ogre in order to infiltrate a robber knight. When Jack Kirby did the *Demon* comic book 10 years ago, he went back and took that same mask that Prince Valiant wears for the face of the Demon."

Check it out for yourself when the book arrives later this year. The large volume is currently available at a pre-publication price of $80 and will sell for $100 when printed. ■

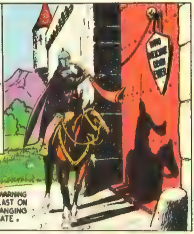
Prince Valiant

IN THE DAYS OF KING ARTHUR

by HAROLD R. FOSTER

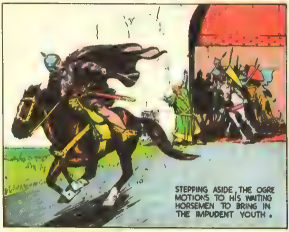
Registered U. S. Patent Office

SYNOPSIS: SIR GAWAIN AND PRINCE VALIANT SET OUT ON A QUEST WITH THE MAID ILENE, BUT NOW GAWAIN LIES WOUNDED IN A HERMITAGE AND VAL SETS OUT ALONE TO VANQUISH THE OGRE WHO HAS CAPTURED THE CASTLE AND IMPRISONED THE PARENTS OF THE FAIR ILENE — VAL WOULD TACKLE THE DEVIL, HIMSELF, FOR JUST ONE SMILE FROM CERTAIN RED LIPS.

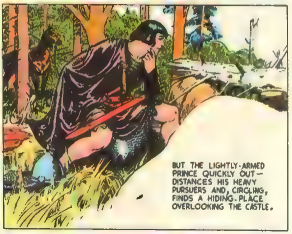


DESPITE THE SINISTER WARNING VAL BLOWS A LUSTY BLAST ON THE GREAT HORN HANGING FROM THE CASTLE GATE.

SLOWLY THE GATE GOES UP AND A HOARSE VOICE CRIES, "WHAT FOOL SEEKS THE DEADLY SOCIETY OF THE OGRE OF JIMSTAR WOOD?!"



STEPPING ASIDE, THE OGRE MOTIONS TO HIS WAITING HORSEMEN TO BRING IN THE IMPUDENT YOUTH.



BUT THE LIGHTLY-ARMED PRINCE QUICKLY OUT-DISTANCES HIS HEAVY PURSUERS AND, CIRCLING, FINDS A HIDING-PLACE OVERLOOKING THE CASTLE.

NOW IT SEEMED TO VAL THAT THE FEARFUL APPEARANCE OF THE OGRE WAS TOO THEATRICAL TO BE TRUE AND HE GETS A BRIGHT IDEA.

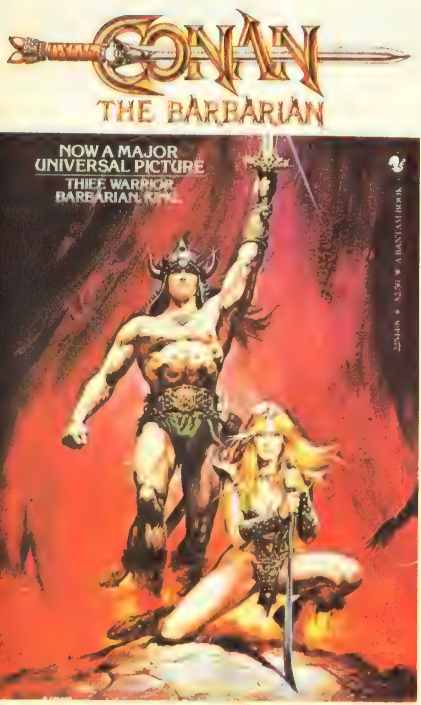
"SO, THE OGRE RULES BY FEAR. WELL, TWO CAN PLAY AT THAT GAME!" AND VAL PREPARES TO ENTER THE CASTLE IN THE DARK.

44 12-11-37

NEXT WEEK — *THE CASTLE WALL*

Conan the Merchandised

By DAVID McDONNELL



ART © 1982 EDWARD R. PRESSMAN PRODUCTIONS

Licensing Conan products is a lot tougher than one might imagine. The novelization, above, was one of the easiest.

Since his birth a half-century ago, Conan has been a thief, a pirate, a soldier, a king. Now, after triumphant campaigns in the paperback and comic book wars, Conan the Barbarian, the epic hero created by Robert E. Howard, is raising his sword on the silver screen.

The movie's success could prompt a series of Conan films; Arnold Schwarzenegger is officially signed for a projected *four* sequels. And this first film effort has already aroused new merchandising interest in the character while revitalizing old publishing activities.

In paperback, the Conan saga and other Howard material remain scattered among several publishers. Most volumes are still in print and available at well-stocked bookstores; the rest are likely candidates for reissue.

Ace Books still has the first 12-volume Conan set. This series was originally published by the now-defunct Lancer Books from 1966-73, edited by L. Sprague de Camp, and written by Howard, de Camp, Lin Carter, and Björn Nyberg. Ace added to the canon three "illustrated Conan novels" (actually short stories—two pastiches by Andrew J. Offutt, a third by Howard and de Camp—illustrated by Esteban Maroto).

Additionally, Ace has reissued Howard material and pastiches featuring other Howard creations, notably Offutt's *Cormac Mac Art* books. The latest Ace offering is *Red Sonja*, the female Conan counterpart revised and popularized by Marvel Comics' Roy Thomas. David C. Smith and Richard L. Tierney are writing the six-volume series.

Still more of Howard's non-Conan short stories and series are available in several collections from Berkley Books. Berkley also published three volumes of Howard's original, *unrevised* Conan yarns, as edited by Karl Edward Wagner.

In 1978, Bantam Books joined the horde with six *new* Conan paperbacks (one collection of stories by de Camp, Carter, and Nyberg, plus one novel each by de Camp and Carter, Offutt, Wagner, de Camp, and Poul Anderson). To coincide with the film's release, the Bantam series is being reissued with new cover paintings.

Bantam's Conan connection ends with a seventh volume, *Conan the Barbarian*, a novelization of the Milius-Stone screenplay, also written by de Camp and Carter.

For L. Sprague de Camp, it's the latest installment in an association with a character that dates to 1950. "That's when I first read Robert E. Howard's one full-length novel, *Conan the Conqueror,*" de Camp recalls. "Later, I discovered some unpublished Conan stories and made arrangements for their publication. Since then, this thing has grown little by little. We've always had in mind that maybe someday, somebody would make a movie out of Conan, and that day has finally arrived."

In 1977, to help simplify negotiations for a motion picture deal, Conan Properties, Inc. was set up. Essentially a literary rights holding company, Conan Properties combines rights to the characters and the original Howard Conan tales (owned by the Howard Estate and administered by its agent, Glenn Lord) with rights to the de Camp-Carter-Nyberg material (owned by the authors). It's a one-stop shopping mall for publication rights to the Conan saga.

Incidentally, Marvel Comics, at first, licensed *only* the Howard material for comic book adaptation; the pooling of *all* rights in Conan Properties allowed Marvel's eventual adaptation of pastiches.

The directors of Conan Properties are de Camp, Lord, and Dr. John Troll, a patent specialist and physicist who serves as President. De Camp's wife and business manager, writer Catherine Crook de Camp, is Comptroller. Attorney Arthur M. Lieberman of Lieberman, Rudolph, and Nowak, represents the firm and handles day-to-day business between the twice-yearly directors' meetings.

"Nobody has the right to write Conan stories except Conan Properties," de Camp says. "Conan Properties actually hires the writers—they're not on permanent retainer—and authorizes them to write, for example, the Bantam Conan novels. All the rights belong to Conan Properties.

"John Milius, the screenwriter and inspired director of *Conan the Barbarian,* created a splendid story developed from the existing Conan saga and other legends of heroic fantasy.

"We just wrote the novelization following the *third* Milius script. Of course, we added to that tale itself. The movie, after all, has to be shorter than two hours, and you can't get everything into a movie that you get into a full-length novel.

"Neither the movie nor the novel is entirely consistent with the rest of the Conan saga. But that's inevitable."

The novelization, *Conan the Barbarian,* is credited to de Camp and Carter as well as to Howard, Milius, and Stone. However, another collaborator, Catherine Crook de Camp, remains unbilled. She previously edited, revised, or rewrote some of the de Camp pastiches. "Yes, in addition to those authors named in the byline, Catherine contributed extensively to the writing," L. Sprague de Camp says. "She actually did at least half the work on the novelization."

In novelizing the movie script, the three writers concentrated on characterization and detail. Catherine Crook de Camp comments: "We did make a few minor changes to make Conan more consistent with the rest of the published stories and to translate his screen adventures back to the printed page.

"We think we know what Howard did and thought because of our biographical work into his life. And we feel that Robert Howard's Conan does grow, change, and become more worldly-wise as his life progresses.

"Conan is an epic hero, not just a walking killing machine."

Early in the film's pre-production, L. Sprague de Camp met with director Milius to discuss the screenplay and the Conan saga.

As "Reagan O'Neal," Rigney is the author of a series of historical sagas for Pinnacle *(The Fallon Pride, The Fallon Blood,* etc.). Under the byline "Robert Jordan," he has been contracted for *two* new Conan novels of Tor's projected six-volume series (possibly *all* by Rigney if Conan Properties and Tor are satisfied with his initial books).

Those paperbacks may only mark the beginning of Conan's role as "a soaring success phenomenon for the 80s." As befits any multimillion dollar movie star, the Cimmerarian will be heralding a legion of new products ranging from Photolist ironon transfers to Collegeville Halloween costumes. Many items are scheduled to hit stores this month, others will debut just in time for the Christmas sales season.

Conan Licensing, a sister—but separate—corporation to Conan Properties, supervises licensing/merchandising. Conan Properties is concerned only with publishing; Marvel, itself a licensee, handles overseas licensing.

In signing the original deal for movie rights with Edward Pressman Productions (later in association with Dino De Laurentiis and Universal Pictures), Conan Properties retained *all* merchandising and licensing rights. Then, in 1980, Conan Licensing was created as a partnership between Conan Properties' attorney Arthur M. Lieberman and University Patents, whose Vice-President, Sid Alpert, also serves as President of Conan Licensing. Conan Licensing Vice-President Mimi Shapiro handles day-to-day business, working out of midtown Manhattan offices.

Most of Shapiro's time has been spent wooing potential licensees. "I'll go out after anything *provided* it's quality licensees that are suitable to the character," she says, but agrees that early, unfounded fears concerning motion picture violence provided a few obstacles. "To a certain extent, the film's R-rating is hurting licensing, but only to a certain extent.

"There have been rejections in certain areas. Some companies are very careful to stay away from controversy. And that's understandable.

"Somebody who sells plastic tubing weapons and sandbox toys for 4-6 year-olds is afraid that their age group will never get to see the movie. And that's too bad, because I think kids of all ages will love it.

"At this point, *Conan the Barbarian* is projected to be the first of five movies. After it hits, there will be four more Conan adventures—a series just like the James Bond films, which are no longer R-rated movies."

Licensing efforts may have been slightly hampered by the past performance of other much-ballyhooed blockbusters, like *The Black Hole, The Legend of the Lone Ranger,* and *Popeye.* In most cases, expectations for boxoffice revenues far exceeded the final realities of audience response and merchandising sales.

"That's true," Shapiro says. "Unfortunately, those films were not boxoffice hits. Otherwise, the track record in licensed characters over the last several years has been a good one for the most part. My only problem is that, until recently, my presentation was only two minutes of footage. That's all I had available to show potential licensees—and that's not a lot.

"We know there will be people who will want to see the movie come out first before they make their commitments.

"Some of the people I deal with already know the character, some don't. But I've never heard anybody say, 'I know Conan, but I *don't* like him!' Those who know this dynamite character are very fond of him. They love him!"

Products already set by Shapiro include plastic buttons, balloons (from Satellite Balloons Manufacturing), and plastic wall decorations (swords, shields, etc.). Shapiro has also talked to companies interested in licensing commemorative plates, videocassette games, arcade coin-operated games, tennis shoes, jewelry, and metallic weaponry (swords and belt buckles, possibly in limited editions for collectors).

(Continued on page 64)

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This is it! We celebrate our sixth birthday with 100 pages crammed with the greatest features you could ever imagine. We give you a birthday present by including 64 pages of solid full-color and a 32 page anniversary section that will include an index to the past year's features, an SF-Film review, SF-TV review and Anniversary Greetings from some of the biggest names in the universe.

Beyond all that, issue #60 has two very special interviews with the directors of movies that will keep you looking over your shoulder all summer. First, Steve Swires gets the low-down on *The Thing* from John Carpenter including comments about *Halloween II*, Rex Reed, *El Diablo* and *Firestarter*. Then, a few dozen pages later, Ridley Scott talks about the making of *Blade Runner* from casting Harrison Ford to scoring the film with Vangelis. Serious film fans won't want to miss these exclusive conversations.

Ed Naha brings us part one of a very special two part look at the Re-Making of *Star Trek*. We have color photos of the new Trek feature as director Nick Meyer, producer Harve Bennett and others talk about the latest *Enterprise* adventure.

If that's not enough, what about the beginning of our exclusive coverage of Disney's *Tron*, or an interview with SF/Fantasy artist Chris Achilelos, or maybe a career article on Universal's master of visual effects, Albert Whitlock? See, there's definitely something for everyone.

Bjo Trimble talks about her "normal life," and David Gerrold gives us a glimpse of STARLOG's 24th anniversary issue. There's also part three of Future Past's History of the Spaceship, Log Entries, letters, and a special anniversary message from our spiritual leader, Kerry O'Quinn.

This giant birthday package is sure to sell out quickly so begin haunting your favorite stores now because the anniversary issue goes

ON SALE JUNE 3

Cruse

(Continued from page 47)

and thumbed through my drawings.

"I like this one and this one," he said finally, selecting out a couple.

"I was hoping I could have, like, a regular feature," I said. "Y'know, *every issue.*"

"We don't do that for *anybody,*" he said. "That's our policy. Nobody gets run two issues in a row. Not even Crumb! We don't want any Stans!"

Oops! Not only was I inadequately hip, I was inadequately egalitarian. You see, in my secret heart of hearts, *I wanted to be a Star!*

I also wanted a feature that would provide me a guaranteed space, where I could experiment (and even fail sometimes) without worrying about having individual segments jettisoned because this one or that one left somebody cold. Brash me! I wanted artistic control!

It was clear that the *Other* and I were operating out of different mindsets. I took back my drawings and thanked the guy for his time. We did the ritual handclasp that somebody had invented for hip folk to do, and I left.

I trudged back to to my quarters on Fifteenth Street. As I trudged, I wondered what I would do now. I had bowed out of mail-order flag production. The underground and I hadn't meshed. What would become of this Alabama kid adrift in his fantasies of sublime accomplishment?

It's 13 years later now, and if I wish I can hop a subway, disembark in the East Village and take the walk again. The intervening years of living have given my feet a firmer footing. I've learned strategies that make survival more possible and satisfaction more accessible.

Yet the mystery I pondered then, I still ponder now. What could I do with my creativity if . . .?

If I had more money. *If* I had more time. *If* I were unleashed. *If* somebody gave me all the crescent rolls I desire, for free.

If I do the work. *If* I master the skill. *If* I learn to tell the tale. *If* I wrestle the angels, give inked form to my dreams. . . .

Such thoughts can rev me up till my head fairly spins. To hell with obstacles! Let me back at my drawing board; I want to conquer all worlds at once.

First, though, I have three commercial assignments awaiting completion. Oh, well. They'll be fun. They pay the rent. I'll give 'em my best.

Maybe I'll manage to clear the time for conquering those other worlds *next* month.

I'm closer, but I'm still not There yet.■

POINT BLANK PRODUCTIONS IS PROUD TO PRESENT A NEW LIMITED EDITION BY *Paul Gulacy*

"STAR"

A brilliant orchestration of dazzling red, white and blue planes come together to reveal the form of the lady named "STAR." This bold graphic composition provides new insight into Gulacy's imagination and refined technique.

The original painting evoked so dramatic a popular response during a recent exhibition in New York that we had no choice — we had to issue a limited edition print.

Each superb copy has been printed on 100% rag paper, cardboard backed and shrink wrapped in clear plastic. "STAR" is limited to 1200, 16" x 20" prints signed and numbered by the artist. We're sure you will find the aesthetics of "STAR" as attractive as its investment potential.

The print is now available at this time for $15.00. Here's how to order:

No billing. Print cost is $15.00. A money order must accompany your order. Please add $2.50 for postage and handling and $3.50 for Canadian or Foreign orders. Ohio residents, please add 5½% Sales Tax. All orders are discreetly packaged and promptly delivered first class. Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery. * DEALER INQUIRIES INVITED *

PLEASE PRINT

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Enclosed is my money order (cash not accepted) for _____ copies of "STAR".

Point Blank Productions, Inc.
22 Woodrow Avenue
Youngstown, Ohio 44512
Telephone: (216) 758-3857

Guest Spot

Breaking In: Tips and Advice

By RICHARD AND WENDY PINI

Editor's Note: After meeting through the letters column of Silver Surfer, *Richard Pini and Wendy Fletcher formed a relationship that has turned into a happy marriage and one of the most successful partnerships on record. From Wendy's fertile mind sprang forth a world of elves and together they launched* Elfquest. *The series, now up to issue 12, is perhaps the single most successful independent product available to fans today. Here, they tackle their most frequently asked questions, with Richard starting off.*

PHOTO: DEBORAH UPTON

Creation co-chairman Adam Malin interviews Wendy and Richard Pini at last February's convention in Manhatten.

We often get asked, "You two are creating and publishing your own comic; how can I do the same?" An implicit follow-up to that question seems to be, "And since I want to make a living at it, how can I be a success like you?"

All judgments of success aside, we can best answer that question by simply looking at how Wendy and I have done *Elfquest*. Keep in mind that how the mainstream and underground comics companies do things is different from how we do them; but if we can't fly you over the swamp, we hope at least to provide you with a not-too-leaky raft.

Getting an independent comic like *Elfquest* from brain to reader involves three steps: creation, production, and distribution. The creative aspects Wendy will tackle in the second half of this column; I'll try to unscrew the nuts-and-bolts of production and distribution here.

Let's assume from the beginning that you're serious about independent publishing, that you have an idea and a talent that you believe will support a decent audience response, and that you're going to make the jump beyond a mimeographed or xeroxed zine that will reach maybe a hundred people. You're thinking at least a thousand copies, and more likely a couple of thousand copies to start.

You've got your artwork. Now, do you go with just that, or do you add other pages to your book? Do you want a letters page? room for advertisements? space for submissions by other people? This is a consideration, because probably your printer will use a web-offset press on your book, and he likes books which are multiples of eight pages long—24, 32, 40, and so on. If you have 28 pages of story/art, it's to your economic advantage to find four more pages. *Elfquest* is a 40-page magazine, with 32 pages of art and eight of other editorial material.

Speaking of that "other" stuff, neatness counts. If you decide on a text page and can't afford typesetting, use a typewriter with a carbon-film ribbon; it makes clean, sharp lettering. Just as with your artwork, you want your non-story pages to be crisp, clean black-and-white. Try to get advertisers to submit ads which are neat, readable and appealing.

We hope that your art pages are all the same size; your printer will appreciate only having to set up his camera once for shooting your book. Therefore it's worth the effort to paste up your non-art pages to the same size—or at least to the same proportion (shape). All this requires is blank sheets of paper for layout (if possible the size of the art pages), your snippets of text or ads or whatever, and a jar of paste. Arrange the snippets on the blank sheets until you've got a pleasing layout, then glue them in place.

What size do you make your book? We've found that "standard" magazine size (8½ by 11 inches) works best for us. Since you're going to try to sell your effort through the direct-dealer shops, you want a package—a finished product—that won't get lost on the dealers' racks. There are a few experimental magazines around in odd sizes, but most offerings fit somewhere between comic-book size (about 7 by 10 inches) and magazine size. This range of sizes fits best, and is most visible, on a dealer's shelf.

So now you've ordered and numbered your story pages, composed and pasted up your editorial or text pages, and gathered the whole thing together. Now what?

Go out and shop for a printer. It's easy—they're in the Yellow Pages. That's what we did, back when we didn't know anything about producing a comic magazine. Ask questions; you might write to other mavericks like yourself and get names of printers they use. Shop around for the best

price; if a printer is local, visit him with samples of magazines you'd like yours to look like; talk with him. You might discover an out-of-town printer who's slightly less expensive than a local outfit; then you must decide if the financial saving is worth doing business by mail and phone instead of in person. Possibly the printer you use has never done anything like your book before; he might get more involved with it because it's a break from his routine.

Then—here it comes—you have to sell more than a few copies, because if nothing else happens, your printer is going to want to get paid.

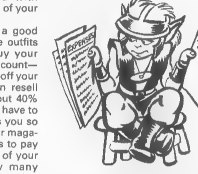
Distributing your product to the dealer market is a straightforward but frustrating process—almost a catch-22 affair. To get the dozen or so larger distributors to carry your book, you have to convince them it's good enough and will sell enough copies for them to make money. That means either you've got to have a track record (which we assume you don't right now) or your material is jump-up-and-grab-'em appealing. There are a lot of products competing for the distributor's dollars.

Since you're probably not independently wealthy (we weren't when we started and aren't now) and can't afford out of pocket the hundreds of dollars—minimum—it will take to launch your magazine, you'd like to know if distributors will take your book before you print it. Which means you should prepare a sample package to send to them for consideration. Make some good-quality copies of your cover art and a half-dozen pages—things to show off your work.

Send a packet to every distributor you can; it's no secret who they are. We print the names and addresses of those we deal with directly in each issue of *Elfquest;* other independents do likewise. Make sure you include an explanatory letter with each package as well as a self-addressed envelope large enough and stamped with enough postage for the return of your sample. Then wait.

If you are lucky and have a good product, some or most of the outfits you contact will want to buy your books. They will buy at a discount—seemingly large, 60% or more off your cover price—so that they can resell copies to their dealers at about 40% off and still make a profit. You have to sit down and figure: if it costs you so much per copy to produce your magazine, and the distributor wants to pay you such and such a fraction of your cover price per copy, how many copies do you have to sell at what cover price to make it worth your while (while covering your expenses)? T'ain't easy, but it can be done. An alternative to selling through distributors is to sell direct to the dealers, but that's a two-edged sword. You make more money per copy, but must ship to—and bill and collect from—many people instead of a few.

'If nothing else happens, your printer is going to want to get paid.'



A monkeywrench that's lately been thrown into the works is that more and more distributors are trying their own independent publishing ventures. With more tight money because of the economy, distributor/publishers might look more critically at your book; they are trying to buy top established talent. You might, as an alternative to self-publishing, want to try submitting stories or art or both to one of the anthology publications; although here as well the publishers are concerned with gathering the best names—they all want to sell copies!

So, nuts and bolts aside, and above all else, you must have something that will grab readers and make them want more of your work. It can be done; it has been done. Now over to Wendy for how we manage that part of it.

'Getting an independent comic. . . from brain to reader involves three steps: creation, production, and distribution.'

I believe that the best approach—philosophical and practical—to creating your own comic book can be summed up in one word: control. Control over layout, design, plot continuity, consistency of characterization, script—in other words, control over the whole package is the key to success in independent publishing. Wonderful art and lousy script (or *vice versa)* won't make it. Half-realized experimental gimmicks may appeal to a minority readership but won't sell big. Assuming you're just starting out, you want to start solid with a product the distributors will be willing to take a chance on. This means that whatever type of graphic story you're trying to sell, be it science fiction, high fantasy, superhero, or something the world hasn't seen yet, it must be presented in the most appealing way possible. I am not necessarily militating for conventional, tried-and-true formats here, for what is the purpose of the alternative press if not to let innovators sing their songs? It's just a simple fact that the better your comic communicates with your readers, the better it will sell.

The artist/writer is fortunate. He or she will have less difficulty in blending art and script smoothly. But a writer and artist team must work together closely, understand each other's approach to storytelling, and compromise often to avoid artistic deadlocks. Sometimes you only get one chance in this business. The competition is fierce. A poor working relationship can bring a project grinding to a fatal halt. Again, communication is everything.

What makes a good comic book? Let's examine its two main components, story and art. No offense to writers but, pragmatically speaking, nine times out of 10 it's the art that makes the initial impression. Most comics fans are art chauvinists. They will often risk their dollars and try an alternative comic on the strength of the art alone. That being the case, be aware of the techniques that make comic art jump out and say, "Hi! I'm good stuff!" to the potential buyer.

High contrast and good balance between black and white areas are always striking to the eye. If you are the artist in the endeavor, go for immediate impact in your inking; the cleaner and crisper your art, the better. Half-toned washes often reproduce as marky, muddy splotches. Avoid them. If you want grey shading in your black-and-white art use zip-a-tone, which can be bought in sheets in a vast variety of textures and tones. Or,

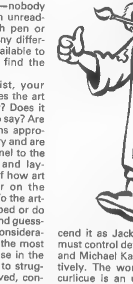
if you prefer to do as I do, use hand-done shading techniques such as crosshatching and stippling; these require the use of fine-point drawing pens or Rapidographs—and a sure and steady grip. But go easy on the skritchy-scratchy noodling. Keep it neat!

Haunt art supply stores and get to know the tools of your craft. Your materials needn't be fancy or expensive to give you great results. Ink your pencils with sable or nylon bristle brushes (I prefer Windsor-Newton Series 223 nylons, tip sizes 000 to 2). Use a good drawing ink (like Higgins Black Magic) and thin it with ammonia if need be. Invest in a set of technical drawing pens (like Rapidographs); they're surprisingly versatile. Sample the two basic kinds of paper surfaces: vellum, which has a slightly rough texture; and plate finish, which is smooth. I use two-ply plate finish bristol board, and always work proportionately larger than the size the art will be when printed. *Elfquest* is an 8½ by 11 inch magazine; my originals are 11 by 15 inches. Use a lettering guide if your freehand lettering is sloppy—nobody wants to work at reading an unreadable comic—and letter with pen or technical pen. There are many different kinds of art materials available to you; experiment until you find the ones that work for you.

As publisher and/or artist, your main objective is clarity. Does the art say what you want it to say? Does it say what the script wants it to say? Are the character and set designs appropriate to the mood of the story and are they consistent from one panel to the next? Do the breakdowns and layouts—first approximations of how art and script will fit together on the page—pace the story well? To the artist, is your style fully developed or do you find yourself guessing, and guessing wrong, a lot? All these considerations are important, even to the most experimental formats, because in the final analysis nobody wants to struggle through a poorly conceived, confusingly executed graphic story that simply fails to entertain. There are levels and levels of sophistication in style. To comic art you can apply principles of Art Nouveau, surrealism, cubism, Mannerism—the possibilities are endless, given proper understanding. But always remember that comic art is cartooning. It is movies on paper. It should respect, and not disdain, its audience.

An eye-catching cover for your comic is all-important; that's what the buyer is going to see first, and it must be an attention-getter. If the cover is black-and-white, go for bold graphic design. Don't go for full process color unless you can take advantage of (and afford) it. Nothing looks more amateurish than an inexperienced painter's attempt at imitation Boris Vallejo or Neal Adams. Bright, unmodeled colors within bold outlines, a la most mainstream comics covers, can be very effective. Try gouache (opaque) tempera or acrylic. Try watercolor transparencies. Try airbrush. But learn to be your own best critic; don't try to show off some flashy technique before you've got a handle on it. Take praise from well-meaning friends with a large grain of salt. You must first know structure and anatomy to transcend it as Jack Kirby has done. You must control detail as Berni Wrightson and Michael Kaluta do to use it effectively. The worship of the almighty curlicue is an unfortunate trend I've observed in many aspiring comic artists' work. Decoration takes the place of substance. Elaborate, meaningless detail—"spinach"—strives to cover up weak composition and bad drawing. Don't fall into this trap. Keep it simple, keep it honest, and you can't go wrong.

'Control over layout, design, plot continuity, consistency of characterization, script—in other words, control over the whole package is the key to success.'



The importance of the script depends on the type of graphic story being told. There are many examples of whole sequences of panels that require no scripts at all; this does not mean that the art carries the story in every case. Again, the writer/artist has the advantage. He or she can readily determine whether a panel should be silent or contain captions and/or dialog. The writer half of a creative team must have a very good visual sense of the story and should build the script around the story's potential for vivid imagery. Since the artist is usually also the letterer in alternative comics, it behooves the writer to keep an eye on the art breakdowns. At that early stage of things the writer can get some idea of how much room for copy will be aesthetically available in each panel, and can make suggestions to the artist without causing massive redrawing.

The above words notwithstanding, there is no "best" way to script a comic. The script can be written complete with stage directions before the artist ever puts pencil to paper. Or the art can be done first and the script adapted to it. Or options and dialog can be agreed up in the layout stage. If the art is somewhat cold and stylized, and yet the story requires the reader's sympathetic identification, the success of the piece may ride on the writer's skill. For example, four identical panels of a simply-drawn flower musing upon its own mortality could be deeply moving, depending on how it is written. Though some graphic stories are not stories at all, but rather collections of stream-of-consciousness imagery, there can be no denying that a series must have a consistently strong blend of script and art to sustain a loyal following.

What kind of comic should you do? It's hard to say what will catch the public's fancy, but take a friendly warning for what it's worth. Comics fans are generally smart. They know sincere from phony. They respond to a strong personal vision and they support it. The *X-Men* has not remained the popular comic-series it is out of a lack of commitment on the part of its creative team(s). It has a vision, a sense of continuity; there is still some love behind it. That type of dedication, plus a streak of daring independence not to be found in the mainstream, characterizes those in the forefront of the alternative press movement. Enter at your own risk, and good luck. ■

Our Guest Spot feature is a great opportunity for the fans to learn what the pros are thinking about on any number of topics.

Please drop us some names, limited to five please, *on a postcard and the names most frequently turning up will be the people we will approach first. While we can't promise they will all want to contribute to Guest Spot, we will make our best effort.*

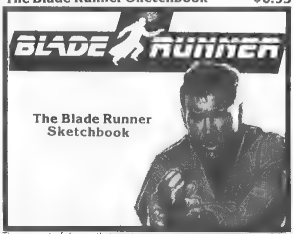
Send your thoughts to: Guest Spot, Comics Scene, 475 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016.

BLUE DOLPHIN ENTERPRISES, INC.

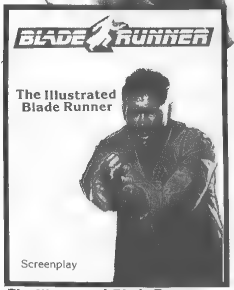
BLADE RUNNER

Blade Runner is sure to be the movie event of 1982. The star is Harrison Ford, straight from three of the biggest-grossing movies ever made. Based on the eerie world of "retro-fitted" future technology from Hugo Award-winning author Philip K. Dick's novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the dazzling effects by Douglas Trumbull will set new standards for SF films. This $20 million production opens in 1,200 theaters June 25, 1982. Pacific Comics is pleased to present three new Blue Dolphin Enterprises publications on *Blade Runner* to tie in with the film's release.

The Blade Runner Sketchbook $6.95



The amount of design that went into creating the look of the year 2019 is staggering. This book compiles the highlights of the costumes, vehicles, buildings, street fixtures, and much more. The artwork includes pieces by Syd Mead, Mentor, Huebner, David Snyder, and even a few by director Ridley Scott. Beautiful work in pencil, washes, pen and-ink, and gray marker. Trade paperback, 96 pages, approximately 11" × 8½".



The Illustrated Blade Runner Screenplay $6.95

The complete script to the blockbuster film, containing the dialogue and stage directions *just as they were handed to the actors*. This fascinating presentation is profusely and magnificently illustrated with specially selected storyboards used in the production. These storyboards are the tools used by the crew to visualize this unbelievably believable panorama of the future. Trade paperback, approximately 8½" × 11", 128 pages.

Dealers: Inquire on letterhead for wholesale rates. Direct sales only.

The Blade Runner Portfolio $9.95

◄*The Blade Runner Portfolio* is a simply *smashing* item! Twelve prime moments from the film reproduced in a high-gloss, collectible format. Full color, sharp images, ready for instant display, produced on high-quality stock, these gorgeous reproductions are packaged in a handsomely illustrated folder. Relive all the excitement of *Blade Runner* with this unique item!

Postage
$1.75 U.S. $2.00
Canada $3.00 others

(C) 1982 The Blade Runner Partnership

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Creating the Comics

Part Three: Lettering

By ROBERT GREENBERGER

Two issues back we covered the pencilling of a comic book story so we're ready for the next step. Most people may think we should be covering the inker's role but that's not until next issue. In the natural progression of comic production, the lettering takes place after the pencilling.

There are a small handful of professional letterers who do nothing but headletter the comic pages. There is another handful that freelance at lettering and do other work during the day. For example, several people in the DC Production Department will go home and work on lettering stories at night.

One of those people, Todd Klein, has become popular among knowledgeable fans since he also has designed logos for several fan-oriented projects such as *Amazing Heroes* and *Gil Kane's Savage.*

The New Jersey-born Klein began picking up his production knowledge while working for Fedders Air Conditioning, putting together instruction books. A comics fan, he brought his portfolio to DC Comics one day and they just happened to need a production person. He's been there for over five years now. In the beginning, Klein did lettering corrections on the comics pages where needed, but it was a good year before he had become proficient enough at lettering to tackle stories on his own.

To learn how to letter a comic, Klein suggests, "You need something to imitate. Take some art that was done by a good letterer and study it." Klein admires the work of such stalwarts as Gaspar Saladino, John Costanza and Jim Novak. As his style has developed, Klein feels his work looks the most like Saladino's.

"The hardest thing to learn," Klein asserts, "is to have the patience to really stick with it. That's the hardest part. I have seen a lot of people with the talent that just didn't have the patience to stick with it enough. It's deceptive, it looks easy and it's not—just like everything else in this business."

As people learn to letter, they should accumulate the necessary tools of the trade. Klein lists them: "You need some kind of drawing board, a t-square, a triangle and a lettering guide." A lettering guide is a plastic device with a round dial that turns to different sizes and is used to help lay down lines on the page.

Most letterers use Speedball pen points such as C6, FB6 or B6 but Klein prefers to use technical pens because they are "more consistent and less messy. It takes a little more time to pick up the flow with a technical pen." In any case, the Speedball pen points have to be filed down using a stone to get the smaller lettering as needed. And for ink, the heaviest ink of all is necessary and both inkers and letterers rely on Higgins Black Magic.

One other tool necessary for work is the right kind of paper. Klein explains that DC uses Strathmore Bristol Board-kid finish. The paper has a rough and smooth side, and letterers prefer working on the smooth. If rough paper is used, the letterer's tool, as opposed to an inker's brush, will pull at the surface and complicate the assignment. Artists using their own paper can frustrate a letterer and DC always encourages their artists to use the company paper, which works well for all concerned.

When the pencilled pages are turned in to the editor, the balloon and caption placement is doublechecked. Working plot-first, the writer has looked at the art and written the appropriate dialogue and narration. The editor will then indicate with numbers on xeroxes or tracing paper where the balloons go. If the story is done full-script, the artist usually roughs out the lettering placement. It's up to the editor to make sure the placement is the best possible.

When working plot-first, Klein explains, "I draw my horizontal guidelines in all the indicated places and I mentally measure all those pieces of copy and figure how they're going to fit. That's more difficult.

"If the artist has roughed out the words, it's just a matter of deciding whether or not what he's written out is going to fit your style."

Unlike artist/inkers, a letterer usually does not rough out the words. "Once you learn how to letter, you should be able to ink the letters right in. The only thing I pencil in are the balloon shapes."

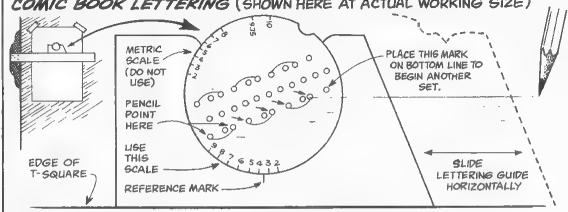
The letterer is responsible for everything written on a page. This includes the balloons, captions, page numbers, sound effects, words on paper or signs and even the panel borders. In Klein's case, he takes each page at a time without reading the script first. "I want to make it more interesting. There is a certain variety to the stories so it's not totally boring and I've gotten to the point where I can listen to the radio or watch TV while lettering."

The letterer can spend anywhere from half an hour to an hour and a quarter on a page—depending on what is demanded of him. Klein can do 15-18 pages of lettering and one or two special tasks per week as a freelancer. Others, such as Ben Oda, a veteran comic strip and comic book letterer, turn out incredible volumes of finished work. "Ben has turned into a lettering machine, perhaps because of the pressure placed on him," Klein observes.

"Often the letterer is pushed into the position of making up for lost time," he says. "Unfortunately, by the time it is drawn, they want to get that book out." In emergency cases, the inking is done first and then the letterer must work on an overlay, usually on heavy-weight vellum (also called english vellum). A photostat is made of the overlay and the production department pastes the balloons and captions into place. Klein comments that the DC Production department gets a job like that once a week.

Letterers have few places to truly express a style and one of those areas is sound effects. "I have a certain one I use over and over to a certain extent," Klein says. "I try to vary it throughout the book. I have standard things, I think each letterer has that and I think that's the way you can be more creative too.

COMIC BOOK LETTERING (SHOWN HERE AT ACTUAL WORKING SIZE)


METRIC SCALE (DO NOT USE)
PENCIL POINT HERE
USE THIS SCALE
REFERENCE MARK
EDGE OF T-SQUARE
PLACE THIS MARK ON BOTTOM LINE TO BEGIN ANOTHER SET.
SLIDE LETTERING GUIDE HORIZONTALLY

SET UP YOUR **PAPER, T-SQUARE** AND **GUIDE** AS IN THE SMALL DRAWING. SET THE WHEEL AT 3½, AS SHOWN IN LARGE DRAWING, FOR STANDARD COMIC LETTERING. PLACE PENCIL POINT IN ONE OF HOLES MARKED, AND WHILE HOLDING T-SQUARE WITH ONE HAND, SLIDE **GUIDE** ACROSS PAPER WITH PENCIL POINT. REPEAT WITH EACH HOLE, AND YOU WILL HAVE THE GUIDE-LINES FOR **THREE ROWS** OF LETTERS. HERE ARE THE COMICS ALPHABETS:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ!?

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ!?

(THESE ARE DONE BY ME WITH #2½ & #3 CASTELL TECHNICAL PENS.)

WARM UP WITH THESE PRACTICE STROKES: |||| /// \\\\ OOOO ≡ ≡≡. WORK ON KEEPING THE LETTERS THE ***SAME HEIGHT AND WIDTH!*** (EXCEPT M, W & I)

NEXT TO THE **LETTERS**, THE **BALLOON SHAPES** ARE HARDEST.

PRACTICE **DRAWING** THE OVALS **FREEHAND**, AND THEN INKING THEM IN...

LUCKILY, **THOUGHT BALLOONS** ARE EASIER!

THIS IS THE **BLOCK-LETTER ALPHABET** THAT FORMS THE BASIS FOR MANY OF MY TITLES AND SOUND EFFECTS:

ABCDEFGHIJKL
MNOPQRSTUVW
XYZ!

AND, FOR SMALLER DISPLAY LETTERS, USE SPEEDBALL!

TRY PRACTICING YOUR BALLOON LETTERING FOR AN HOUR OR MORE A DAY OVER A MONTH. IF YOU'RE STILL INTERESTED BY THEN, AND CAN SEE SOME IMPROVEMENT, YOU MAY BE ON THE WAY. **GOOD LUCK!** Todd Klein

"You're usually pretty much on your own with story titles. Making a story title interesting is part of a letterer's professionalism. I have to consider the area I have—I want to fill the area as best I can. Second of all, I want to make it as exciting as possible. Sometimes certain titles will have directions; other times you're pretty much on your own. There's a standard block lettering I use to start out with on a lot of things and embellish it from there."

Klein explains the need for eye-catching credits: "I've seen a lot of jobs where the credits were invisible. If you're going to have a credit box at all, it has to be something people are going to look at."

The tall, blond man also explained that when a letterer gets a chance to create a cover or design house ad, creativity is one of the most important elements. "You need more flexibility on house ads. If you look at a lot of Gaspar Saladino's ads, you will see more variety and more art involved. You have to make things really individual and memorable, so you can't just use standard block letters on those."

Covers, Klein added, depend upon the editor. Just as it is a plum assignment for an artist or inker to get a cover, so too for a letterer. Klein, for example, only letters maybe 10 percent of DC's covers. Again, Saladino gets most of those assignments. "Sometimes the editor knows exactly what he wants," Klein said. "Len Wein will tell you exactly what he wants and will draw you a rough sketch of it. An editor like Julie Schwartz may have an idea of what he wants, he just wants it to look good.

"For covers I usually letter my original larger than the original art. I have to work fairly heavy, but that gives me a little more room to be creative."

As for logos, Klein—who has designed many for DC including the *New Teen Titans,* the *Titans* mini-series, *Captain Carrot* and *Wonder Woman* (although he had no part in the new emblem used)—feels he brought a degree of knowledge with him from Fedders. "You will have to be able to fit the style of the logo with the character, make some kind of reference there. Also, it has to have a professionally clean look. As far as designing, you should submit several sketches first and get an idea of what they like, and then from that, you will do a more finished version."

And for all that, a letterer can expect to get anywhere from $7 to $11 per page at DC or Marvel. Covers, logos and special projects (like DC's comics for Mattel and Atari) all pay more than the standard rate. Klein commented that the rate has gone up steadily over the years but to make a comfortable living at it, a letterer would have to do about eight pages a day.

In respect to the finished comic, a letterer contributes, "more than people would think. If the lettering is not up to standard, the reader will be quick to pick it up. And it distracts him from the story. A good letterer's job is to be as unobtrusive as possible." Sometimes a letterer can be too stylized, Klein warned, and then people get distracted.

The industry can always use more good letterers, Klein added. It is easier for someone to break into the business as a letterer than an artist and Klein suggested that people may want to try that route if they have the talent and patience to letter comics. Klein said that people could approach whomever handles the lettering assignments (at DC it is editorial coordinator Karen Berger, at Marvel it is production chief Milt Schiffman) with originals or xeroxes of lettering they have done. "There is certainly nothing wrong with bringing in some samples and having them say, 'Go home and practice some more.' If you have the patience to stick with it, eventually you will get work," Klein said.

For the easy-going Klein, lettering, in addition to his production work, makes for a comfortable life. There's that certain satisfaction that comes with a job well done. For him and other letterers, that satisfaction comes about three months after they turn in their assignment. That's about how long it takes for the printed comics to reach the comic racks.

Once the finished lettering assignment is turned in (and in many cases it is turned in a few pages at a time) the editorial coordinator or traffic manager gets the pages out to the inker. But that's a whole other story. ■

Opposite: Pages from *Firestorm,* left, and *Warlord,* right. In *Firestorm*'s case, the penciled in words by artist Pat Broderick have not been erased as yet. Examine the pages and see just how much the letterers have contributed.

And Now, Some Other Views

Lettering is an integral part of the finished comic page. Since few artists letter their own work—the late Wally Wood did so and Jim Aparo continues to pencil, letter and ink his own work—we decided to ask around and get some views on lettering from the artists.

DAVE MANAK (special projects editor—DC):' "I like to do lettering that kind of has personality to it and fits the work. I feel lettering is a part of the composition of the art on the page. A lot of times I'll have sound effects and I will make the sound effect part of the art, part of the panel. As far as the balloons go, I just try and fit them into the panel just as intricately as I can as part of the art. Then I play around with the letters in the balloons."

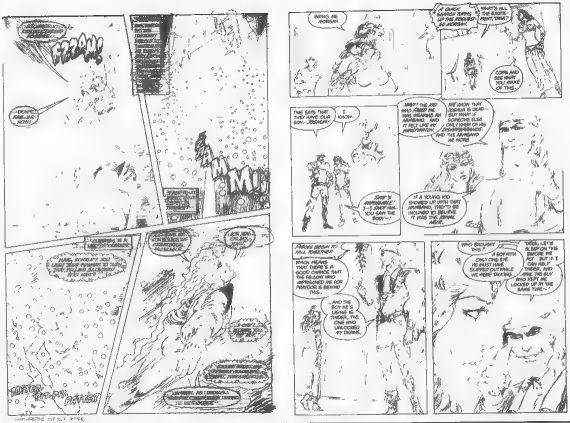
NICK CUTI (assistant to the vice president—DC): "The way we used to work at Warren is that we had finished art and we'd just leave space for the balloons. If the balloons don't read correctly, the story is going to seem very confusing; if the eye goes to the wrong balloon first, then the reader is going to get lost, get bored with the story and just drop it midway.

"There was an artist who actually had the balloons covering the characters' heads. It was an artist who did his own lettering. He wanted to do that for effect since he didn't want their faces seen right at that moment. I told him, if he'd rather have their heads covered up, use shadows rather than balloons and he couldn't understand why. I told him that balloons don't exist. The whole idea is to make them as nonexistent as possible. If you do something like that, you're telling the reader, 'Look, they're part of the artwork.' You try and make it look as unobtrusive as possible."

JIM STARLIN (artist/writer): "They are probably the subtlist contribution to what the page looks like if they do their stuff right, they just make the page ring without the reader even realizing it. It's a matter of balancing the page—Tom Orzechowski has nice balance. It's a real subtle artform."

FRANK MILLER (artist/writer): "Since I write my own material before I draw it, I'm able to make my placement of the copy contribute to the story. My feeling is that every element on the page should contribute to the story telling. In some ways, the lettering is the art of readibility. Generally, the best letterers do the lettering that you don't notice when reading a comic book. They're so readable you're hearing the words rather than reading letters. I think that's true of every skill involved in comic books. A good artist isn't one who draws a picture you notice, a good artist is one who makes you live through a dramatic scene.

"Generally, I put a lot more control over where the copy is on the page than most people do. I just rough out the sound effects since I'm not much of a letterer. Often letterers I work with strengthen that up quite a bit. John Costanza, for example, only lettered one job of mine that I know of, and he lettered up a title in a style I didn't expect and it was delightful."



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This Month In FANGORIA

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As a special exclusive, through the courtesy of Mick Garris of Universal Pictures, FANGORIA brings you an awesome panel discussion entitled "Fear On Film" whose participants include none other than John Landis, John Carpenter and David Cronenberg. These three new titans of terror will discuss in detail the ingredients for a successful horror film. Three giants in the field all at one date! Who will survive and what will be left of them?

As this issue will hit the stands in May, a spectacular futuristic action film will be opening in theaters. *The Road Warrior* is the sequel to *Mad Max* and it may very well be described as Australia's *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. These two Mad Max films are by far and away the most successful movies in the history of the Australian film industry and we will provide an exciting behind-the-scenes glimpse of the current nail-biting Mad Max adventure with a talk with producer/stunt driver/sound man Byron Kennedy. Get a special preview of what may be the next American box-office smash.

The revival of 3D horror will also be featured in this jam-packed issue. Exclusive interviews with Charles Band, the producer-director of *Parasite*, and Earl Owensby, the North Carolinan maverick who has made the killer-dog tale *Rottweiler*, will show you what three dimensional terrors lay before you. And following up on previous on-location reports, Uncle Bob Martin will let you in on his visits to the sets of John Carpenter's *The Thing* (a far-flung, ice-bound British Columbia) and George Romero's *Creepshow* (in exotic Pittsburgh).

And still there'll be more! Backing up these fabulous features will be interviews with young makeup whiz Greg Cannom; Paul Clemens, star of *The Beast Within*, a Val Lewton retrospective to commemorate the current remake of *The Cat People*; and a talk with Roger Corman standby Dick Miller whose on screen exploits have ranged from *It Conquered the World* to *Little Shop of Horrors* to *The Howling*!

WHO CAN ASK FOR MORE!

On Sale Now

Conan

(Continued from page 36)

have to be enough the same that it retains the basic appeal, but I don't think you have to be religious about it. The character will die on the vine or become stale unless the creators who come into it are allowed to infuse it with their own personalities and their own ideas.

"I like Barry Smith's artwork very much, but I don't think John Buscema should have to draw like Barry Smith. I think the series profits from John Buscema inserting his own kind of elements."

Buscema has become known as *the* Conan artist. While he followed a much-loved, finely-rendered version by Barry Windsor-Smith, he has turned the world of the Hyborean Age into his own. He's been drawing the book for about eight years and is now the primary artist on the titles. He has a tendency to change his mind about what he wants to do, but he signed a piece of paper promising Louise that he will pencil and ink *Conan the Barbarian*. He has given up *King Conan* (now pencilled by Mark Silvestri) while continuing to do the majority of the layouts for the *Savage Sword* book. Buscema has also completed pencilling, inking and coloring the 44-page Marvel adaptation of the movie.

Both the Joneses and Fleisher have nothing but praise for the work Buscema has done on the book. Louise claims that her vision of Conan's world matches Buscema's while Jones and Fleisher find working with him sheer pleasure.

Jones and Buscema approach the monthly title by phone and bat around the story ideas. If Buscema wants to draw a story set on an island, for example, Jones will try and accommodate him. On the other hand, Fleisher does a synopsis of the plot and after Louise approves it, sends the plot to Buscema. The two found no need to discuss details with one another. In fact, it wasn't until this past March 5 that the two met.

Buscema was mailed a copy of the final draft of the John Milius-Oliver Stone screenplay along with visual materials and he paced out the comics version of the story. It fell onto his shoulders to decide what had to be cut, expanded or contracted. Once the pages were inked, the script and pages were sent to Fleisher, who adapted the dialogue to the comic.

"The thing that I added and am most proud of was to do the adaptation in the first person, with Conan telling the story," he says happily. While the movie has only a few voice-overs, Fleisher had to adapt those few lines

of dialogue and retain the flavor throughout the entire story. "In the comic, we couldn't have just a few 'voice overs,' since we have captions every two or three panels.

"One of the things about an adaptation is that the comic should stand on its own as a comic. You should be able to buy the comic and, even if you haven't seen the movie, still have a damn good, exciting story to read. That's more important than having every single word written down exactly as the guy says it in the movie."

When asked if the Conan in the adaptation will look like the Marvel character or Arnold Schwarzenegger, Fleisher says it's definitely Buscema's rendition of the Cimmerian. "John felt, in his pictures, that the people shouldn't pick up a Marvel magazine and encounter a different Conan," Fleisher explains. "I think it should be the Conan in *Conan the Barbarian, King Conan* and *Savage Sword of Conan*. John changed very subtle things so it would be in keeping with out Conan and I think that was the right way to go.

"There is a scene where Valeria and Subotai, his companions, and Conan are climbing ropes up the Tower of the Serpent. Subotai is using climbing apparatus and he's portrayed in the movie as climbing the fastest. There's another scene where Valeria is climbing faster than Conan and in those scenes, John drew them so that Conan is going the fastest. In our Conan, it would seem out of place, otherwise, so we compromised. I think that the Conan of the adaptation is very faithful to the movie and there are enough subtle changes so there wouldn't be any jarring differences between their Conan and our Conan."

SO WHAT'S LEFT?

"Michael and I were talking one day," Louise begins, "and he said, 'Gee, it's too bad that Conan always has to win.' And I said, 'He doesn't always have to win. Under the right circumstances, you can say a lot more about the character in a story where he loses.' And Michael said, 'Hmmm.' So we may see that story sometime soon."

Sooner than Louise may think, since Fleisher brought up the same incident and adds, "I would love to do some stories where Conan is helpless for a long period of time. I would love to have Conan in a cage for 30 pages so I can concentrate more on how he thinks. I'd like to see something where Conan is not so free, where he is not the greatest fighter. I'd like to do a story where Conan is defeated. I think those kind of things make a character more real, but it's a tricky balance because Conan's appeal is his mastery of this very tough world."

Both Fleisher and Jones are leaning towards introducing recurring characters to help reader identification. Fleisher warns it wouldn't be like "the Joker turning up in every third Batman story" but already he's introduced a pirate who has turned up twice and most likely will again.

And the two authors, bolstered by Buscema's masterful storytelling, concentrate on their plotting. Each claim it is their strongest asset and feel happy with the way their stories turn out. Louise sits back at her desk, looks around and decides that all is right with the Conan books. She's happy with the give and take between her writers and her artist—it makes the job a little easier.

Summing it all, Jones comments that Conan is like any other character written for the comics medium. "My theory is that a good story is a good story and it doesn't matter who the main characters are. You either have a story that has a beginning, a middle and an end or it doesn't work. No character personality, no matter how much bigger than life it may be, will make up for bad storytelling. I really think that was what Howard was doing. Conan was a convenient vehicle for him to take the stories where he wanted to go." ■

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Katz

(Continued from page 40)

cided to go by the alternative publishing route."

After more than seven years of constant work and steady production, *The Kingdom* recently passed the half-way point. The quality of the art has consistently improved from book to book, as has the complexity of the story itself. Looking back on the saga's genesis and development from the vantage point of today, Katz is asked if he might have done it differently if he were to start over on the *Kingdom*.

"I wouldn't make changes," he says after some thought. "I don't think so. You see, I think it's important that as the work was laid out originally, a lot of the drawing is vague. The things I tried to achive were so difficult. In pencilling the art was much easier, but in working out the black and white . . . there were areas that were total mysteries to me. I hadn't touched brush and pen for 17 years and it was like entering into a new universe. And in a sense *the First Kingdom* is as raw as that in the first two books. As clarity becomes more and more of a reality in the books, and the characters take on more performance, the artwork starts to come up to its potential.

"It's very interesting. . . . I used to get a lot of mail saying that the characters looked alike. In the beginning they *were* alot alike. In the beginning *man* was a lot alike. As he became more and more sophisticated, his life became more complex, avenues of expression opened up and changes took place. The books develop very naturally—this was probably unconscious on my part—so that the drawing, the writing and the story develop almost like a distant memory of something that occurred . . . something about The Fall. And I'm almost glad that it did develop the way it did.

"Also," Katz explains, "I get a lot of mail from art students who just love to study my anatomy. Because I work on knuckles and knees and areas that are so difficult for many artists to do, and I work out the problem and explain it to them. If they had been seeing the sophisticated work that I'm doing now right from the beginning, it would be as though there were no beginning for me. If they watch very carefully, they can see the way the artwork develops. The way I begin to lose the comic-book attitude in the hands and slowly but surely, they become more delicate. Even the carriage of the people. It was so difficult for me to construct . . . to give them the kind of dignity that was necessary for this epic-type novel. It's something that's within us all—as the epic is within me." ■

Fandom

(Continued from page 18)

Would *X-Men* have been read without a Byrne or a Cockrum? The Titans are young, too, although not quite as young as the cool hipsters of the 1960s.

Brad Norning told me that he thinks the Titans are popular now because they are the "new" strip. He's right. The reason that Titans seem to have taken over the Legion and X-Men readership is because the books are similar. When *Swamp Thing* and *Dracula* were popular, nobody accused them of taking readers away from *Superman* and *Avengers. Batman* was never accused of taking sales away from *Superman.*

X-Men and *New Teen Titans* did not take sales from the Legion. The Legion's readership remains large and loyal at its core. In many instances there is overlap with *X-Men* and *New Teen Titans.* There are also reasons why Legion fans will not read either book while others will. For instance, within Legion fandom exists a vociferous anti-Chris Claremont clique. Yet to fandom at large, Chris Claremont is a darling. And, as noted above, these books are new, and intrinsically more unique than more established ones.

In the final analysis, the segment of readers that is no longer enchanted with the Legion is that segment that never was fond of the Legion, but instead followed the creators. This is not the proper forum to discuss the merits of following a comic book feature rather than a particular artist or writer. People are reading *The New Teen Titans* because it's written by Marv Wolfman and drawn by George Perez. They may well stop when it's written by Gerry Conway and drawn by Ric Estrada. *New Teen Titans fans,* those who like the strip's concept first and not its creative team, will remain no matter who edits, writes and draws it. The same is true of the X-Men, and the same is true of the Legion. I am still a Legion fan, even though I'm reading it years later than I was when I first sat down in front of a De Jur typewriter to complain that I wasn't able to read any stories about them. I never liked Mike Grell's work on the strip as some people did. I never liked Gerry Conway's or Paul Levitz's work as much as some others. I am still a Legion fan. You may not be, and I may not like your favorite book, or your favorite artist. But I am a Legion fan, and there are thousands like me, just like there are thousands like you. And I will not stop being a Legion fan, even if Don Heck writes the book and Murray Boltinoff draws it.

Now do you understand? ■

Merchandise

(Continued from page 51)

Licensees have several options in the use of artwork and design of products. They may use *any* Marvel *Conan* material (drawn by Barry Windsor-Smith, John Buscema, Gil Kane, and others), employ their own staff artists, or utilize movie material (logos, promotional art, photographs).

Some products will appear in *both* movie and comic book styles. Celestial Arts is planning an initial line of four or six movie-oriented posters; comic book posters will probably follow later. The well-dressed fan can also choose from tee-shirts featuring both versions of the character as well as movie-themed Conan jackets, baseball shirts, and other clothing.

Heritage has created a set of all-metal sculpted figurines representing friends and foes from the Hyborian Age. And, although contracts have not yet been finalized, another major toy company will offer plastic action figures of Conan, Valeria, Thulsa Doom and company. Present indefinite plans call for several sets of figures in varying sizes (possibly up to 10 inches high) with matching weaponry and accessories.

Peter Pan Records, which had previously issued illustrated Conan records, is now readying a series of dramatized barbarian adventures to accompany the film.

Creative Media has licensed a do-it-yourself film kit designed for high school students. Each film strip features special Conan comic-like artwork but no dialogue, enabling fans to create their own adventures—writing, narrating, and acting out what happens on the screen. Group participation is also the theme of Simulated Publications' new *Conan* game. It's an adult fantasy entry in the tradition of *Dungeons and Dragons.*

With product deals literally being signed every week, many other Conan products will probably appear in the near future. "It's very hard for me to say what new licensees we'll have within the next two or three months," Mimi Shapiro cautions in March. "But we do expect, once the film premieres, that there will be a great many more Conan items."

"We're looking forward to all of them," L. Sprague de Camp says. "The movie will be a howling success, and we anticipate a series of sequels equally good. We love seeing Conan on screen—and on toys, comics, tee-shirts, records, and games."

Catherine Crook de Camp agrees. "After 50 years, it's a fantasy—Robert E. Howard's dream—and at last, it's all coming *true.*" ■

Reporter

(continued from page 13)

PACIFIC COMICS

Captain Victory #6 will be a 48-page comic for $1 featuring 30 pages of Jack Kirby art and story, a five page preview of Steve Ditko's new character, the Missing Man (soon to premiere in *Pacific Presents*), and a Groo the Wanderer tale by Sergio Aragones. Art Director Steve Schanes told us in March that Groo, a barbarian satire, will be getting his own bi-monthly title to premiere later this year. Groo previously appeared in *Destroyer Duck* #1.

Following the publication of the *Daredevil* index, Pacific intends on reissuing the entire collection of volumes in their "definitive" format. Starting with Spider-Man, the index will be updated to include everything from *Amazing Spider-Man* to *Marvel Team-Up*, *Marvel Tales* and *Spectacular Spider-Man*. Other characters are being considered for the balance of the volume, such as Morbius, Howard the Duck and Man-Thing. Both square-bound and hardcover editions of the complete indexes will be made available.

CAPITAL PUBLICATIONS

With *Nexus* #3 due in June, Capital is trying an innovative experiment in the independent field. The comic will be sold with a flexi-disc containing a soundtrack for the story. Sound effects, original music, dialogue and narration will all be included in the disc, produced by Audio Comics, a Madison, Wisc. firm. Flexi-discs have been used before in both *Mad* and STARLOG.

Richard Bruning adds that the package will still have a 32-page story and will sell for $2.95. The third issue completes the two-part telling of Nexus' origin. He says that if the package is a success, of which he is confident, there will be more flexi-comics in Capital's future.

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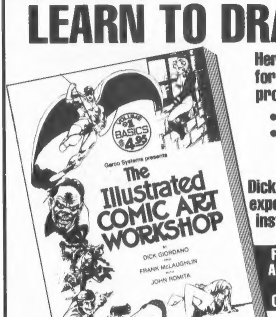

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Ed. Notes

I first started covering the comics scene professionally almost 10 years ago. I was still a public school teacher at the time, but I had a column called "The SUPER Market" in *Rock Scene*, a New York-based monthly rock 'n' roll magazine.

It was an exciting time for comics fans. Marvel and DC were experimenting in new and different directions—and comics only cost a quarter. Some of my favorites from that period were *Conan, Tomb of Dracula*, and *Doctor Strange* from Marvel, and Kirby's "Fourth World" books, *Kamandi* and *Sword of Sorcery* from DC. At about that time Marvel went into competition with Warren in the black-and-white magazine field, hitting first with *Savage Tales*, and later with a full line of horror and fantasy titles. They were wonderful.

The alternative comics—generically known back then as "the undergrounds"—were also hitting their stride. With the emergence and growth of new and already established independent publishing houses like Last Gasp and Kitchen Sink, we were exposed to the works of (among many others) Crumb, Spain, Jay Lynch, Shelton and Sheridan and our own Howard Cruse. Back then undergrounds went for 75¢ or a dollar.

Throughout the decade of the '70s many comics characters made the jump to other media—TV, film and even the Broadway stage. But comic book sales started to decline . . . they are still declining.

Editor Bob Greenberger points this out in "Word Balloons," and calls on Marvel and DC to lead the way, to take chances and be daringly creative. I doubt that they will do this on their own, but I don't despair for the field. The alternative publishers are now leading the way and, for the first time, they are competitive with Marvel in terms of price, quality and talent. As sales from Marvel and DC books continue to drop, expect to see more from the alternatives—after all, Nature and comics fans abhor a vacuum.

The point here is that Marvel and DC, as important as they have been, are not the entire comics industry. There are a great many talented artists, writers and editors who can't get work at Marvel or DC, or who refuse to work for them because of the nature of the contracts offered by the two companies. But there is room for them in the ever-expanding comics field.

Go to your local comics shop and take a look at all the juicy and interesting products that are *not* published by Marvel or DC. Look through a couple and it should become crystal clear that innovation in comics isn't dead, it's just had a change of venue. If you're disappointed with the current direction of your favorite Marvel or DC book, stop buying it. Look for an alternative—there are plenty of them available with more on the way.

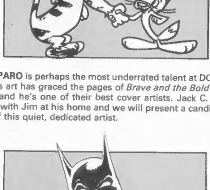
Howard Zimmerman

Howard Zimmerman/Editor-in-Chief

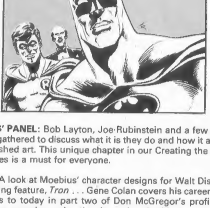
To Be Continued...

BRUCE HOGARTH is regarded as one of the premiere masters of human anatomy and also one of the top *Tarzan* artists ever. In recent years he has begun turning up at comic conventions and is one-third of the Masters art seminars held around the country. He took a break in his schedule to talk with Howard Zimmerman about his life and work.

CRUSADER RABBIT: He was the first animated feature for television and along with his companion Rags, roamed the world in search of high adventure. We have a two-part look in store for you. We'll have rare artwork and exclusive interviews with the creators.



JIM APARO is perhaps the most underrated talent at DC Comics. His art has graced the pages of *Brave and the Bold* for 10 years and he's one of their best cover artists. Jack C. Harris spoke with Jim at his home and we will present a candid portrait of this quiet, dedicated artist.



INKERS' PANEL: Bob Layton, Joe Rubinstein and a few other inkers gathered to discuss what it is they do and how it affects the finished art. This unique chapter in our Creating the Comics series is a must for everyone.

PLUS: A look at Moebius' character designs for Walt Disney's upcoming feature, *Tron* . . . Gene Colan covers his career from the '60s to today in part two of Don McGregor's profile . . . Saturday morning animation is explored with a new series detailing how they are created . . . Guest Spot, Character Profile and lots of other goodies.

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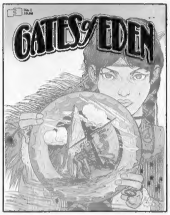

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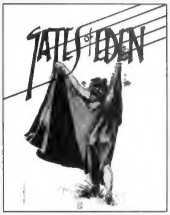

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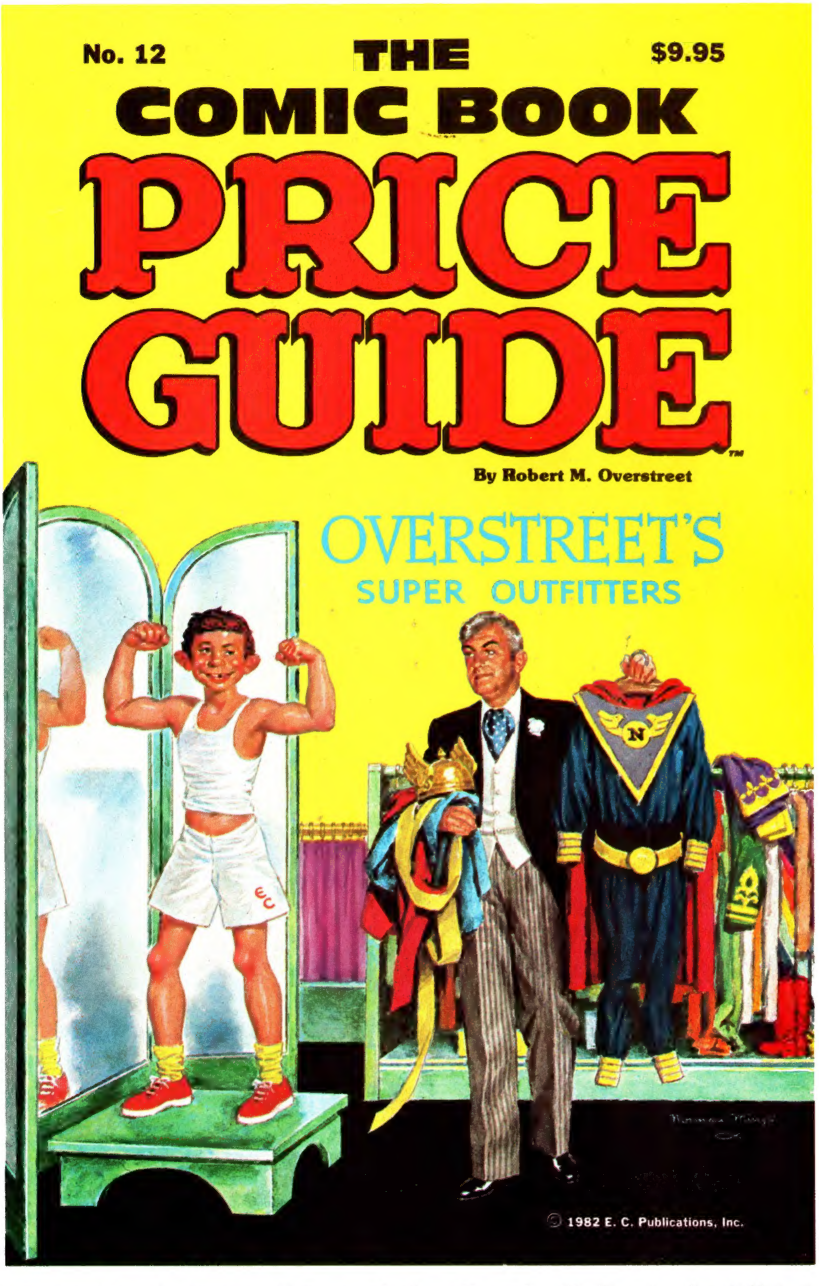

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